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XLR8R

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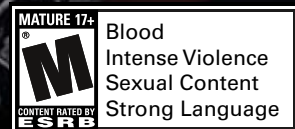
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130

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THE FIELD, SHOT IN BERLIN BY RAGNAR SCHMUCK





Welcome to 21229. A zip code where life's lessons come early and often and where the first is survival. For Melo, 21229 is not just a neighborhood in West Baltimore; it's the place that's never left his side. When he led Syracuse to the championship, the people of 21229 lifted him up as he cut down the nets. In 2003 they sat front row during draft day, and when he held up gold in Beijing they stood beside him. Now West Baltimore lives on as a symbol tattooed on his shoulder, reminding him how much he owes the neighborhood that gave him everything. The H.O.O.D. Movement and the Carmelo Anthony Youth Center are just down payments on what Melo's giving back to B'more. Welcome to 21229, the zip code for West Baltimore, and the place that is still teaching its lessons through the heart and mind of the man they call Melo.

jumpman23.com/21229



BECOME LEGENDARY



JOKER NEAR HIS HOMETOWN OF BRISTOL.

It's well-worn fact that 2009 was a rough one for nearly everyone who survived it. Most of us who didn't die or lose our jobs still spent a good part of the year bummed about economic fallout, angry about the health-care situation, tweeting about Jacko, or trying to avoid doing something equally mundane and depressing.

But whatever the case, the shitty year begot some amazing music (as hard times often do), and there were plenty of artists new and old who, over the past 12 months, more than made up for us having to take stay-cations and go on fun-employment. Every section of this issue represents our favorites of 2009—essentially, the stuff that got us through the rough patches—and thus, a typical best-of/worst-of issue this is not. (Our favorites are our favorites, and they deserve more than a bullet point.) Whether it was the deep dub-techno of Intrusion (a.k.a. Stephen Hitchell, who plies us with production pointers in Artist Tips), Geoff Manaugh's BLDGBLOG (Manaugh writes about some choice sound installations in TBC), Schlachthofbronx's hi-NRG party bass, or DJ Koze's ridiculously hot remixes (he sends his regards in this month's Inbox), 2009 yielded some stellar music, art, and style—not to mention top-notch discourse on all those topics—and we've done our best to encapsulate some of it with this year-ending edition of XLR8R.

Sure we rolled out a lot of our favorites earlier in the year—FaltyDL, Salem, Cooly G, Junior Boys, Mavado, and Dam-Funk immediately come to mind—but we also managed to hold on to a few gems. In this issue, you'll find features on The Field, Martyn, and Nite Jewel, who all blessed the early part of '09 with incredible albums, and they still continue to sling quality singles left and right. Glasgow's Hudson Mohawke finally delivered his hotly tipped debut LP for Warp, and the oft-elusive Bristol dubstep wunderkind Joker just flat-out killed it with his singles and remixes. Uproot Andy took the post-geographic world of global bass by (tropical) storm, and NY disco faves Holy Ghost! returned with a new track and spurred excitement for their own full-length expected in 2010.

Like every November, we also catch up on the year in music technology, so on top of the usual In the Studio feature (in which HEALTH discusses making *Get Color*, and gives us with a look at what's in their studio online), A Place to Bury Strangers' Oliver Ackermann gives us a primer on how he makes his Death By Audio guitar pedals, and we showcase extra Artist Tips pages with General Elektriks and Dixon and photos and video from behind the scenes of Throbbing Gristle's reunion tour at XLR8R.com/130extras.

So, as it turns out, we found plenty to love about the year we all loved to hate. We hope that you'll consider the contents of this issue the silver lining to a dark cloud that's almost passed.

—Ken Taylor, Editor

XLR8R

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Joker, shot in Bristol by Deville

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JULIA GALDO



Julia Galdo is a fine-art and editorial photographer based in Los Angeles. Her work often involves people and their interactions within various environments. Galdo graduated from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2004, and worked in advertising in some shape or form until 2009. Her photos have been published in *Nylon*, *Angeleno*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Latina*. Galdo enjoys a very long snorkel, her favorite food is eggplant parmesan, and she is tall. She photographed Nite Jewel for this issue of *XLR8R*. juliagaldo.com

ZAINAB JAMA



Born and raised in London, Zainab Jama began her career in journalism as editorial assistant at *i-D Magazine*. She joined the freelance world earlier this year, and has since become a regular contributor to the likes of *FACT*, *FADER*, *i-D*, *The Stool Pigeon*, and *RWD*. When she's not writing about music or fashion, you can find her at any bass-heavy night, rambling on Twitter, or fast asleep. For this issue of *XLR8R*, she caught up with Scotland's Hudson Mohawke in London.

GEOFF MANAUGH



Geoff Manaugh is the author of *BLDGBLOG* and *The BLDGBLOG Book*, and a contributing editor at *Wired UK*. He's a fan of the sounds of glaciers and plate tectonics—and some very loud Steve Bicknell. For this issue, he wrote about his favorite sound installations of 2009 in our TBC section. bladblog.com

DEVILLE



London photographer Deville started her career as a music journalist before making the transition from writer to snapper. An obsession with eyes and mouths led her to portrait photography while an unhealthy interest in urban exploration means that much of her work combines traditional beauty with grimy dereliction. For this issue's cover shoot, Deville headed to an abandoned 1940s military base near Joker's hometown of Bristol. deville-photography.co.uk

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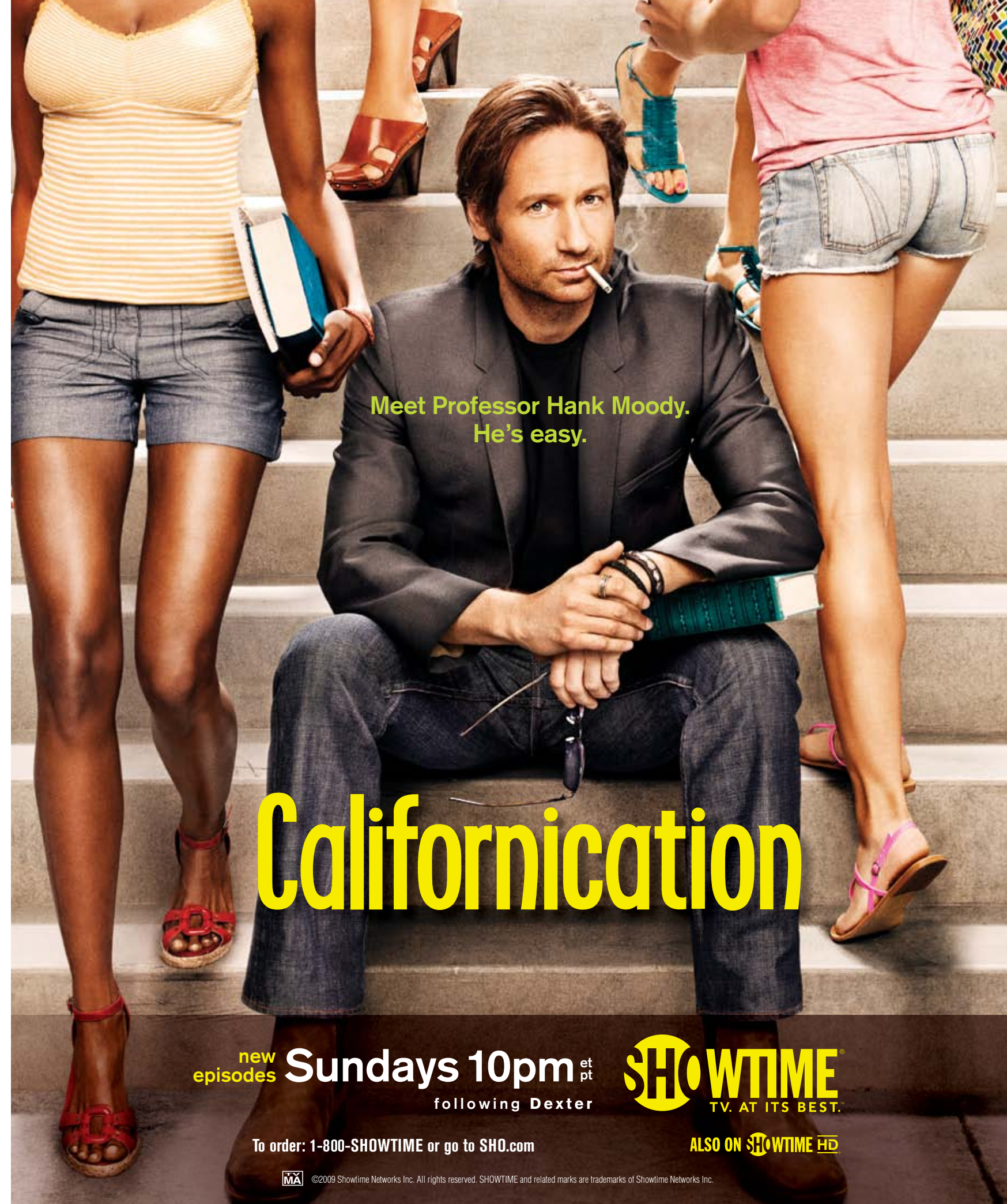


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XLR8R TV

DUCHESS SAYS AND LUSINE & PEZZNER'S TUNE IN AN AFTERNOON



It's festival month at XLR8R TV. First, we head to Seattle for the sixth annual Decibel Festival, where we hit the rails (the light rails, that is) and grab found sounds from around town with **Lusine** and **Pezner** before they assemble them into an ambient tune in one afternoon. Then the XLR8R crew shoots east for Pop Montreal, and chats with French-Canadian electro-noise punks **Duchess Says**, who bring us out for a greasy breakfast and then get down and dirty with the city's always-up-for-it indie fans.

See all the madness at XLR8R.com/tv, and come back every Tuesday for new episodes, including recent shows with **Jel & Doseone** and **Anti-Pop Consortium**.

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Check out music news and features, free MP3 downloads, and reviews updated every day, plus photo blogs, music videos, free PDF versions of XLR8R, and a whole lot more at XLR8R.com.

XLR8R'S "BEST DECADE EVAAR" CONTEST

Grab the year's best in music, games, and technology in this decade-ending sweepstakes!

As the end of 2009 quickly approaches, we find people talking less about the year in music than trying to encapsulate the whole decade. Musically speaking, we saw a triumphant return to the dancefloor on a broad scale, but also a rising interest in the more personal escapades taking place in bedrooms across the world. The music industry spent the decade flopping around like a fish out of water, and, in turn, DIY idealism has taken many bands to new heights. It's been a decade of highs and lows, abrupt change met with quick adaptation.

In that spirit, we want to hear about your past 10 years—your best moment and your worst moment described in under 200 words. It's a hefty task, but the rewards are worth it. The five most interesting entries will net copies of **Hudson Mohawke's Butter** (Warp), **Martyn's Great Lengths** (3024), **Nite Jewel's Good Evening** (Human Ear Music), the self-titled debut from **Schlachthofbronz** (Disco B), and **DJ Koze's Reinterpretations** (Get Physical). You'll also snag **Native Instruments'** brand-new **Audio 2 DJ**, the world's smallest USB DJ interface, which comes packaged with a demo version of Traktor Pro, plus the Kore Player and Soundpack. Then you'll grab **Assassin's Creed II*** (Ubisoft), the sequel to the fastest selling new franchise in videogame history, on the platform of your choice ("Prepare to be overwhelmed," says *IGN*). And to top it all off, you'll soon be sporting a pair of **Onitsuka Tiger Fabre™ BL-L** sneakers—a throwback to the original high-tops made popular during the 1974 NBA All Star tour of Japan. So, tell us that amazing story you've been keeping secret all these years.

Entries will be accepted via standard mail and email, and must be received by January 10, 2010. Send your entry to: XLR8R's Best Decade Evaar, 3180 18th St. #207, SF, CA 94110 or email contest@xlr8r.com with "Best Decade Evaar" in the subject line. *ESRB Rating: MATURE with Blood, Intense Violence, Sexual Content, Strong Language

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PODCAST



ROSKA, DRE SKULL, KODE 9

If our last issue wasn't indication enough, we're into all things funky these days. So we urge you to check out some great exclusive sets from cover star **Cooly G**, up-and-coming producer **Roska**, and Hyperdub king **Kode 9** (who instead laced us with a set of classic '90s UK garage, which he calls the Bubble 'N' Squeak mix). After those, download NYC-based electro-hip-hop-bounce producer/DJ and head of Mixpak Records, **Dre Skull**, who comes with a hard mix of all things new, used, borrowed, and bassy.

Get your dose of can't-miss hotness and sign up for our weekly podcast at XLR8R.com, where we feature exclusive mixes from all across the spectrum, including new sets from **Douster**, **Schlachthofbronz**, **Matias Aguayo**, **Zombie Disco Squad**, and more.

XLR8R.COM/PODCAST



SEPT/OCT
NO.129

XLR8R TV interviews Philly artist Andrew Jeffrey Wright

Spankrock's Naeem names his five fave Philly DJs

Podcasts from Brennan Green and Roska

FaltyDL makes sushi on XLR8R TV

In the Studio featured artist Traxx hits us with a mix

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AUGUST
NO.128

Exclusive podcasts from the Type, Wireblock, Modern Love and Dynamic labels

Interview excerpts with Mladen Solomun and Durrty Goodz

Labels We Love extra features from Slumberland, No Hats No Hoods, and Cómeme

XLR8R.COM/128EXTRAS

LOOK FOR THE XLR8R.COM EXTRAS ICON

This issue is filled with online extras, including extended interviews, photo outtakes, audio clips, and videos. See them at XLR8R.COM/130EXTRAS



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NITE JEWEL

RAMONA GONZALEZ USES EIGHT-TRACK LOGIC—AND A TOUCH OF HEIDEGGER—TO CRAFT WISTFUL LO-FI DISCO.

PHOTO JULIA GALDO

WORDS LULU MCALLISTER



Ramona Gonzalez's resume overflows with creative projects, but the soft-spoken voice of Nite Jewel, is still just finding her legs musically. Using a self-proclaimed "technically amateur" approach—messing around on a keyboard, singing in her head, mumbling aloud until something sticks, and then hitting the record button on her portable eight-track cassette deck—Gonzalez creates music that alternately evokes doe-eyed innocence and dark sensuality.

"I think that the process is the product for me right now. I don't really have a sense of how things are going to turn out yet, in terms of writing songs. I'm not that mature in the process, where I have a vision in mind and am able to execute that vision—but I think that's good. Once you start having in mind the product, you might start to get more self-conscious," says Gonzalez, who recently added a "really nice" computer with Logic to her set-up, yet still favors her old eight-track ways. "Logic makes you extremely finicky and picky. You start concentrating on things that don't matter," she notes. "It's not equivalent to my emotional or spiritual process in writing a song, so that's kind of problematic for me."

As the decidedly muddled words woven through Nite Jewel's debut album, *Good Evening*, demonstrate, Gonzalez isn't exactly aiming for lyrical clarity. The slurred phrases of many songs, such as "Heart Won't Start," could be mistaken for some language other than English. With her vocal levels mixed to match the surrounding instrumentation, Gonzalez melts songs like "Artificial Intelligence" and "Weak for Me" into blushing, breathing piles of soft coos, synths, and drum-machine beats. She took voice lessons and worshipped microphone diva Lisa Lisa growing up, but, when it comes to her own material, she leaves the dry vocals for "people who can really, really sing—like Maria Callas." Instead, she treats her voice like a second keyboard, running sweetly atonal modulations through a favorite dark purple Johnson analog delay pedal—a carryover from her days playing in rock bands in the Bay Area. The effect enshrouds her words in a "muddy, crazy, uncontrollable" gauze that Gonzalez loves. "There are people who are very talented with

conceptual writing; they can write about a movie or some imaginary universe they've created—but me? My lyrics are pretty personal. For this album, there was just a lot of detritus spewed and I didn't necessarily want to subject anybody to that," she says.

Gonzalez moved from New York to Los Angeles three years ago to attend the philosophy program at Occidental College, but the change of scenery also marked the start of her ongoing relationship with Tiny Creatures, a now-defunct gallery run by artists Jason Grier and Julia Holter in LA's Echo Park neighborhood. The gallery was an early home for Gonzalez's poetry, performance art, and audio and video installations (including a typewriter exhibit based loosely on the philosophy of Martin Heidegger). It was also host to many of Nite Jewel's first performances.

Gonzalez became ensconced in a small artistic community of people "making music very quietly in the recesses of Los Angeles at their own pace, on their own dime"—Ariel Pink, Geneva Jacuzzi, Gonzalez's husband Cole M.G.N. (also a guitarist in Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti), and current bandmates Emily Jane (formerly of The Bubonic Plague) and Corey Lee Granet. Gonzalez and her friends performed an eight-hour experimental composition on a rooftop, presented impromptu keyboard-accompanied cookbook readings, and crafted art out of words, alcohol, video, song, and dance.

Meanwhile, the danceable lo-fi sound of Gonzalez's Nite Jewel project has placed her alongside artists such as Deerhunter, Telepathe, and members of the Italians Do It Better family in larger clubs and venues. Gonzalez would just as soon stick to the small art spaces where Nite Jewel first dipped its musical paintbrush. "Galleries are smaller, have books or art on the walls, and absorb more of the sound—it sounds a bit more muffled, which I like," she says.

THE THING THAT GOT RAMONA GONZALEZ THROUGH 2009

"My cats, K.Z. and Dennis. When Cole was away on tour and I was studying like crazy, the cats always stayed up with me while I finished various papers and paced around like a madwoman."

COLLECTION:
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DESIGNER MIKE DAVIS OF BURLESQUE GIVES US THE BEST OF THIS YEAR'S PHILATELY FRIDAYS FROM HIS **SO MUCH PILEUP** BLOG.



MACCABIAH GAMES (1)
 Designed by renowned Israeli graphic artist Dan Reisinger, who created the logos for most of the Maccabiah Games. I love his use of bright colors and clever geometry, especially the visual puns on the Star of David.

BRAZIL EYEBALL (2)
 Ahhhh, art about computers in the dawn of the post-Tron era. The pixelated eyeball has a nice Big Brother thing about it, too, what with the stamp being from 1984 and all.

DUTCH DRUMMER (3)
 Why don't stamps look like this anymore? Psychedelic swirls and a rock drummer smashing his set apart? Sign me up for a lifetime supply of postage if this is the case.

MENTAL HEALTH (4)
 This is a stamp promoting German mental-health awareness. I love how even a topic as heavy and serious as that can be depicted with the same wild energy and color scheme as a Jefferson Airplane poster.

JAPANESE FAMILY (5)
 A lot of design in the '60s and '70s was all about stripping down objects to their most absolute basics and emphasizing the nuances that make them what they are. These curvy blobs have just enough detail and seasoning to tell you they're people, members of a family at that. They don't need a single extra line added—and can't afford to lose one.

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UPROOT ANDY

FROM *KUDURO* TO *CUMBIA* AND BEYOND, ANDY GILLIS BRIDGES THE POST-GEOGRAPHIC MUSICAL GAP.



WHAT GOT UPROOT ANDY THROUGH 2009

"Each new UK funky skank, or rather, watching them on YouTube."

When Uproot Andy rolls out the names of rhythms, he savors them deliberately, like a hoodoo priest chews on a root: *kuduro*, *bullerengue*, *cumbia*. And like a root doctor, it's from the mixing of these ethnically diverse musical styles that Andy Gillis draws power. It's a hoodoo he's practiced as a DJ, as co-founder of New York City's digi-global party Que Bajo?!, and as a producer for the ZZK and Bersa Discos labels. And now, along with Que Bajo?! cohort Geko Jones, he's faced the most post-modern of DJ tasks: taking their global sounds to *cumbia's* ancestral homeland.

"The crowd might've been surprised to hear us play this folkloric music from their own country," says Andy, on the phone from Bogotá, Colombia. "But we're not playing traditional Colombian music—I don't feel weird playing the stuff that I've remixed here. [The fact is] Colombia's one of the least popular places for *cumbias* right now—at least amongst young people, in the city, almost no one plays it."

One of the brightest music stories of the young 21st century is the burgeoning renaissance of globalized electronic music. From hip-hop's plundering of *bhangra*, to the explosion of Balkan

beat, *baile* funk, and the current *cumbia* revival, the past decade has seen a surge of interest in ethnic rhythms. And at the forefront stand artists such as Uproot Andy, who see each genre less as a scene to join, and more as a color to add to their palette—creating the world's first post-geographic 'folk' music.

"A lot of the scenes that we fold into this [music]—something like *baile* funk or *kuduro*—they exist on their own [geographically]," says Gillis. "At a Rio *baile* party, they would not play *cumbia*. These things are still local popular musics. People talking about 'global bass' are interested in all of those things, mixing those elements. On this [Que Bajo?!] tour of the US, we've seen there are openings [for this music] all over the place—not connected geographically, but via the internet."

The first "opening" Uproot Andy discovered was New York's Bulgarian bar, Mehanata, and its chaotic world-music parties. A curious record collector, Gillis fell right into Mehanata's anything-goes aesthetic. It's nothing new for New York City's generations of musical mixology. But in today's blogosphere-dominated global music world, dissemination that might once have taken years

occurred overnight.

"[The difference is] temporal," says Gillis. "If I say, 'Oh, I've heard of this genre, let's see what it sounds like,' I can just do it. I've felt like an ethnomusicologist—an academically unsound one, because I only use the parts I like."

As he prepares his first album-length project—after a slew of remixes for *cumbia*, *baile* funk, and other genre artists—and finishes up his first tour of the US and South America, Uproot Andy stands ready to enter the next decade in a distinctly exciting position. Along with his Dutty Artz and Que Bajo?! colleagues, and an international assortment of artists and DJs, Uproot Andy is on the cusp of a new musical scene—before it's even got a proper name. "As a composer, finding a new rhythm is like an artist with a new medium to work in," he says. "All the things that have influenced me have been genres—so I was jealous, a year or two ago, when I felt like I was doing something that wasn't a 'scene,' wasn't gonna have a name. But that's changing."

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BEST OF THE FESTS

A SIMPLE SAMPLING OF THE PARTY SPOTS WE HIT AROUND THE WORLD IN '09.

FESTIVAL	WHO YOU'LL SEE	WHAT ELSE YOU'LL FIND	BEST THING	WORST THING	HOOK-UP POTENTIAL
<p>March</p> <p>SXSW</p> <p>Austin, TX</p>	<p>Vivian Girls, Telepathe, Thao With the Get Down Stay Down, HEALTH, Ulrich Schnauss, Francis & The Lights.</p>	<p>BBQ galore, killer southern hip-hop parties (featuring Devin the Dude, if you're lucky), Thurston Moore and Keith Morris everywhere, lots of free shit.</p>	<p>It's like spring break for the hipster set!</p> 	<p>It actually is spring break for the college set, and when that converges with St. Patrick's Day revelry, the downtown core gets a bit trying.</p>	<p>High. It's a bi-coastal clash of hot-and-bothered indie fans drunk on cheap beer and sweating under the Texas sun... Need we say more?</p>
<p>May - June</p> <p>MUTEK</p> <p>Montreal, QC</p>	<p>Villalobos, Appleblim, Gas, SND, Mike Shannon, Carl Craig, Alva Noto</p>	<p>Astounding audio-visual showcases, smoked meat sandwiches (or smoked Portuguese chicken—it's all good), an unusually high number of sex shops.</p>	<p>Great line-up, tight quality control, and the awesome island that you party on (and you will party on it).</p> 	<p>the mnml ppl</p>	<p>mnml. srry!</p>
<p>August</p> <p>Øya</p> <p>Oslo, Norway</p>	<p>Fever Ray, Benga & Skream, Datarock, Grizzly Bear, Gang Gang Dance, Royksopp, Crystal Castles</p>	<p>A relatively quiet and ridiculously clean city. Even the public transportation feels high class. Also, some of the kindest black metal fans on the planet.</p>	<p>A diverse line-up and friendly, well-behaved festivalgoers that actually like music—the crowd is amazingly free of bros.</p>	<p>Oslo's propensity for random summer downpours and cold spells.</p>	<p>Moderate. Warning—all the stunningly tall and attractive Norwegians might crush your self-esteem.</p>
<p>September</p> <p>Decibel</p> <p>Seattle, WA</p>	<p>Lusine, Mad Professor, Martyn, Robert Hood, Mary Anne Hobbs, Daedelus, Echospace</p>	<p>Idyllic environs and great coffee everywhere (and open late!).</p> 	<p>Venues are all relatively close together, and there's at least one solid after-party every night. Double-bonus for the daytime park events.</p>	<p>Walking up Capitol Hill from downtown to most of the venues—take a cab.</p>	<p>High. ...if you're a Whirling Dervish Burner at a dubstep showcase. Also high if you can find the after-party that's still serving booze at 3 a.m.</p>
<p>September - October</p> <p>Pop Montreal</p> <p>Montreal, QC</p>	<p>Fever Ray, Faust, Diamanda Galas, Duchess Says, AIDS Wolf, Glass Candy, Think About Life</p>	<p>A European-like city within driving distance of New York, autumn foliage, an indie craft fair, the perfect hangover cure (poutine), great bagels, and Leonard Cohen's house.</p>	<p>A diverse line-up, workshops, and bikes for rent.</p> 	<p>Dodging cars as you bike in chilly rain between far-flung venues.</p>	<p>High. Higher if you speak French. Highest if you speak French and are into gritty garage rawk. (Sooo hot right now!)</p>
<p>October</p> <p>CMJ</p> <p>New York City, NY</p>	<p>Broadcast, Atlas Sound, The xx, Delorean, Lemonade, Glasser, Cold Cave</p>	<p>Loads of wide-eyed college kids, snotty Brooklyn hipsters (many of whom were wide-eyed college kids about six months ago), delicious 4 a.m. pizza</p>	<p>It's in New York! If you can't find a way to have fun here, there's something wrong with you.</p>	<p>19-year-old college students that want to go deep about The Arcade Fire.</p>	<p>High. Loads of horny young hipsters = high hook-up potential... unless you're crashing on your friend's couch in Bushwick: not sexy.</p>

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A PAIR OF BRISTOL PUNKS SPIN AMBIENT ELECTRO AND
VINTAGE SYNTHS INTO APOCALYPTIC CHAOS.



THE THING THAT GOT FUCK
BUTTONS BENJAMIN POWER
THROUGH 2009

"Spinach: With the extensive
touring, I need to make sure
I stay healthy, so I eat loads
of spinach."

While Bristol duo Fuck Buttons' latest record, *Tarot Sport*, might skew toward ambient electro, it's hardly surprising that the band's genesis came during Benjamin Power and Andrew Hung's involvement in the hardcore punk scene as teenagers. "It's informed who I've become as a person somehow," Power says over the phone from the UK. "We tend to make music that we enjoy, and, in a way, it doesn't really matter what's going on around us. It's not like we wanted to make a record that would appeal to a wider audience. We just sort of stumbled upon these songs."

The band emerged in 2004, as their synth-tinkering turned from casual hobby to tireless jamming and a methodical approach to song construction. The duo began to draw attention for its caustic soundscapes, vintage electronic tones, and a combination of dark, sometimes off-putting drones and on-tape screaming matches, and after developing a relationship with the All Tomorrow's Parties promoters that

resulted in numerous festival dates and a record deal, they released *Street Horrsing*, their 2008 debut, which distilled the group's shambolic synth drones into a massively well-received album, equal parts Black Dice and Bruce Haack.

Now, just one year after *Horrsing's* unearthing, the band has returned with a more mature statement in *Tarot Sport*. With fewer of the violent eruptions that characterized their debut, Fuck Buttons has created an environment where songs can explore loose and hazy atmospherics while retaining a solid structural backbone. "The process of writing has stayed intact since day one," Power says. "We don't build a song around a beat or a melody. It all stems from long jam sessions." These loose song structures manifest themselves in a myriad of ways, from the spacey swell of "Surf Solar" to the robo-techno shuffle of "Rough Steez." Those two worlds collide on the melodic climax of closer "Flight of the Feathered Serpent,"

culminating in a record that spins tangible feelings from a mountain of synthesizers and drum machines.

In order to maintain that controlled chaos live, Fuck Buttons has left surprisingly little room for improvisation. Instead, they play out their compositions like skilled classical musicians, with bits of songs divided into "phases" that act as a map, guiding the pair through their cavernous pieces. But when the writing process is so loose, details like sequencing and arrangement become crucial, as Power explains. "Our songs go through extreme evolutionary stages, so some songs, from their first manifestations, will change quite a lot up to the tracks that you'll hear now on *Tarot Sport*. The transitions are just as important to us as the songs itself. The whole ebb and flow of the record is important to us, and the narrative is very strong as well."

◊ TAROT SPORT IS OUT NOW ON ATP RECORDS.
FUCKBUTTONS.CO.UK

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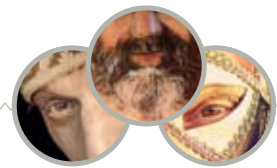
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INBOX:
DJ KOZE

THE CREATOR OF **THE YEAR'S FINEST REMIX ALBUM** DISCUSSES STEVE REICH, LOST LAPTOPS, AND WHY HE SHOULD HAVE REPLACED TERMINATOR X.



Bar none, *XLR8R*'s favorite compilation of 2009 was DJ Koze's *Reincarnations* remix collection for Get Physical—hell, it ranks up there amongst the year's best records period. The Hamburg DJ/producer gave his signature treatment to tracks from artists as disparate as Chilean house god Matias Aguayo and '60s German torch singer Hildegard Knef. Everything Koze touched—Matthew Dear, Wechsel Garland, Nöze—turned to gold, and he left our tongues wagging in anticipation of his upcoming 2010 full-length. So we shot Koze a quick email with the hopes of exploring his idiosyncrasies and his colorful past, and discovering what lies ahead. *Ken Taylor*



What are you listening to right now?

Dudley Perkins, Holy Smoke, High Places, Bibio.

What's the weirdest story you have ever heard about yourself?

That I will be the leader of a new generation and I can change the world with my wonderful music and stuff like that.

What band did you want to be in when you were 15?

Public Enemy. I was thinking maybe I could replace Terminator X 'cause I can scratch better than him, and fight shoulder-to-shoulder racism.

Worst live show experience?

I don't know, but my last strange experience was in Bogotá, where two minutes after I started my set, the technician tangled himself in a cable and completely wiped out the DJ set-up, breaking the table. We were able to fix it a few minutes later, and the sound came back, and the atmosphere was even better than before. Let's all make mistakes!

Favorite city in which to play?

Bogotá.

Favorite studio toy?

My *balafon*.

What is one thing you couldn't live without?

I have a small favorite soft pillow. I can't sleep without it.

What is your favorite item of clothing?

I have a clothing problem.

If you could reduce your music to a single word, what would it be?

Warm.

If you had to listen to one song on repeat for the rest of your life, which one would you choose?

Maybe a part of Steve Reich's *Music*

for *18 Musicians*. It's so long and there is so much to discover.

What did you always get in trouble for when you were little?

For being honest.

Which other artist would you most like to work with next?

I will not say. If he/they read it now, it would be a bit embarrassing for me.

What's the last thing you read?

Tom Wolfe's *I Am Charlotte Simmons*.

In the future...

I want to paint more and become a better person.

Stupidest thing you've done in the last 12 months?

After [many] years I bought myself a new laptop. It was not easy to get all the stuff copied from the old one, but finally I got it. Three days later I put my laptop on the security belt at London City Airport and forgot to take it after scanning... but—Swahimi-style—they found it and I got it back.

What's next?

Starting the PAMPA label, which I just founded with my friend Marcus Fink, to release good music from nice human beings.

DJ Koze's *Reincarnations* is out now on *Get Physical*. dikoze.de

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<p>SWAPSH! BACK UP IN THIS</p>					



SCHLACHTHOFBRONX

BAVARIAN JOKERS THROW AUTOTUNE, *DEUTSCHE SCHLAGER*, *KUDURO*, AND MORE TOGETHER FOR A BELLY FULL OF BASS.



WHAT GOT
SCHLACHTHOFBRONX
THROUGH 2009

"Pelican flight cases: They save a lot of energy not having to think about what could happen to your equipment while you're traveling."

There's something pleasantly scrappy about the frenetically paced tracks that comprise Munich trio Schlachthofbronx's self-titled debut. "We've got a shitload of unfinished stuff on our hard drives," says Benedikt, one half of the group's primary production core, and who prefers to go without a last name. "When we realize it takes us too long to get something straight, we just switch to another session." It's hardly surprising for anyone who's given the group's *Belly Full of Pills* mixtape, which made the rounds on the 'net this past year, a quick listen. Mixed from their first EP of the same name, *Belly Full of Pills*' ADD-addled aesthetic threw more ideas into 13 minutes of dancefloor-friendly bass than many producers will generate in a career. Miami bass, *reggaeton*, techno, hip-hop, *kuduro*, dancehall, and even bouncy, polka-esque *deutsche schlager* all converge in a way that's so smooth and sensible that you hardly notice the beat you were dancing to at the beginning rides on an entirely different time signature and tempo

by its end. Punctuated with "silly lasers, sirens, and bomboclaats," *Pills* (and Schlachthofbronx's recently released LP) also features vocals from South Africa's Slush Puppy Kids, who chant raunchy AutoTuned lines like "Too much girl under that costume/Ass big enough to eclipse the moon" and lend tracks such as "Too High" and "Holdin' That Dick" even more live energy.

In fact, the group's tracks all seem so destined to be mixed together that the band didn't even want to put out a full-length in the first place. "But [our label] Disko B was like, 'C'mon, make an album,' so they convinced us," admits Jakob, Benedikt's partner-in-crime. (They also count friend Christoph as a "phantom" member of the trio.)

Like their fellow countrymen Jahcoozi and Modeselektor, Schlachthofbronx (whose name tips a hat to their Schlachthof meat-packing-district neighborhood and their New York hip-hop influence) are part of a new cadre of dance music producers that are noisily sidestepping the

stereotypical ideas of Teutonic precision—and they're doing it with glee. As if the airhorn that adorns the cover of *Schlachthofbronx* weren't enough of an indication, the heaving bass, hard bounce, over-the-top synth lines, and dutty rap vocals that pour forth from its insides just scream "party!"

"We wanted to make something different and more diverse," says Jakob.

"We were kind of bored by the way German techno or minimal developed," Benedikt continues. "And I think many people who make that kind of music felt like that, too... We want to make functional club music in the first place. We want people to have fun and dance, stagedive, and scream! I don't want to be at a party and wait an hour for one cool, punchy bassline."

LISTEN TO SCHLACHTHOFBRONX'S EXCLUSIVE XLR8R PODCAST AT XLR8R.COM/130EXTRAS.

SCHLACHTHOFBRONX IS OUT NOW ON DISKO B. MYSPACE.COM/SCHLACHTHOFBRONX

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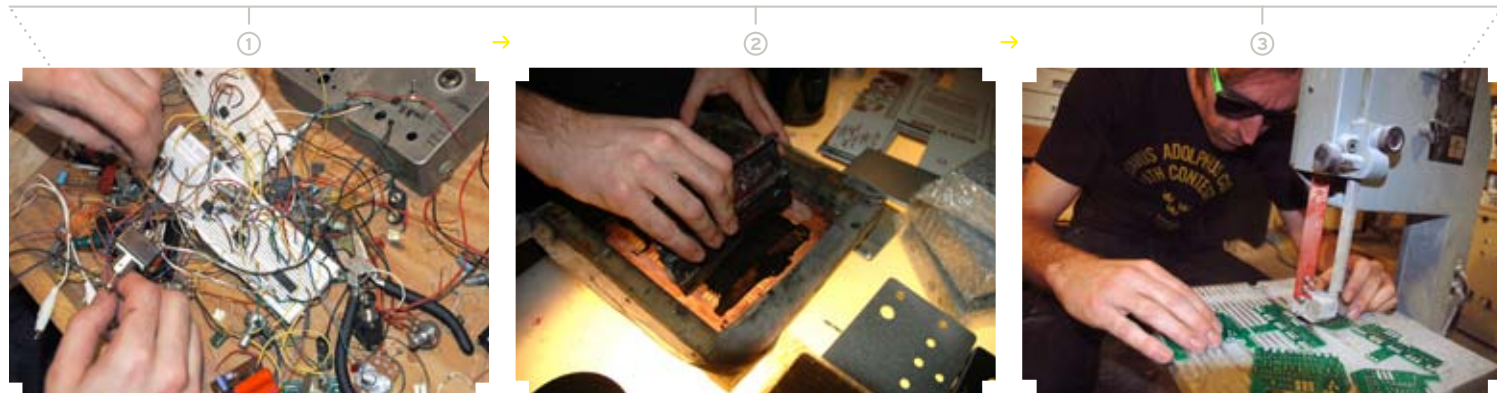


PEDAL PUSHER

GETTING UNDER THE HOOD OF A PLACE TO BURY STRANGERS' CUSTOM GUITAR SOUND.



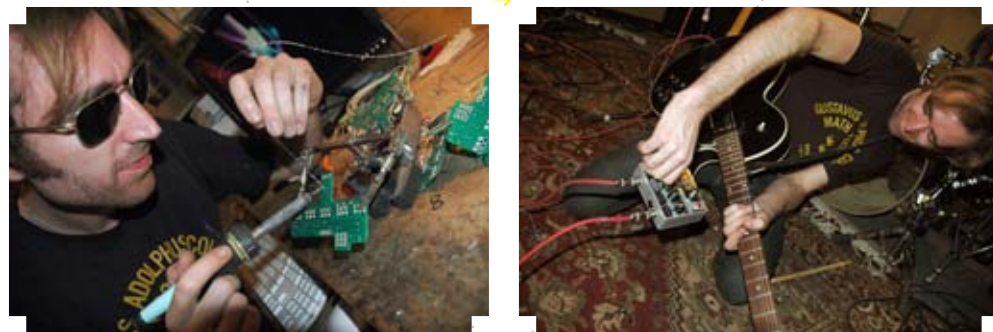
Word on the street these days is that Oliver Ackermann's group, A Place to Bury Strangers, is the loudest band in New York. And one can only assume that that's due to singer/guitarist Ackermann's uniquely fuzzy, noisy ax sounds, which he crafts with his own line of pedals under the company name Death By Audio. We talked tech with the Brooklyn band leader and got the lowdown on how he makes his custom effects boxes. *Ken Taylor*



1 The first steps in creating an effect that sounds really cool are research and experimentation. I will read chip documents, use knowledge from previous designs I've come up with, and experiment with the design on a solderless breadboard. Swapping out components and trying some things that are not suggested are sometimes the keys to getting really good results.

2 Once the design is complete and sounding sweet on the breadboard, all of the controls are mapped out on an aluminum die-cast enclosure. I have to make sure everything will fit and interact with the foot and hand in the best way possible, as well as be durable and held together to withstand being thrown around. The enclosure is then drilled, powder-coated, and silkscreened so it's all ready to have the guts and brain put in.

3 The circuit boards are made to fit in with as many components connected directly to it so it will be stable and hold everything together. It is drilled, etched, and then cut out on a bandsaw to be the right size for all of the parts to fit around it.



4 Next, the components are placed into the pedal and all of the initial wiring is done. The circuit board is populated with the resistors, caps, transistors, and other pieces of color-coded candy, and then soldered together. It is dropped in and hardwired to the parts on the inside. Then all the traces are triple-checked and it is tested with a multimeter to ensure all connections are good and the transistors are all biased correctly.

5 All of the knobs are put on, a battery is put in, the back plate screwed on, and little rubber feet glued to the bottom. All that's left is picking up a guitar and it's time for a little fun with this Supersonic Fuzz Gun!

A Place to Bury Strangers' *Exploding Head* is out now on Mute. deathbyaudio.net

2009

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CLOUD

'09

WERE WE TO HAVE GONE THE USUAL ROUTE OF HAVING ARTISTS, WRITERS, PHOTOGRAPHERS, AND FRIENDS CHIME IN ON HOW THIS PAST YEAR SHOOK DOWN, THIS FEATURE WOULD NO DOUBT HAVE BEEN FILLED WITH A LOT MORE WORSTS THAN BESTS; 2009 WAS JUST THAT KIND OF YEAR. BETWEEN THE ECONOMY, TIRED MUSIC TRENDS, AND THE FACT THAT JUST ABOUT EVERYONE WE KNOW IS UNEMPLOYED, SOMEHOW MAKING A LIST OF *XLR8R* ARTISTS' FAVORITE GADGETS AND CLOTHES JUST DIDN'T SEEM RIGHT. INSTEAD, WE'VE PACKAGED A HANDFUL OF OUR FAVORITE ARTISTS OF '09—NOT A DEFINITIVE BEST, PER SE (IS THERE SUCH A THING?), BUT RATHER A SAMPLING OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO MOVED US, MOTIVATED US, KEPT US GUESSING, LISTENING, ANTICIPATING, AND WAITING WITH BATED BREATH FOR EVERY NEXT 12-INCH, VIDEO, DOWNLOAD, MIX, OR LP. **THE FIELD**'S SLEPT-ON FOLLOW-UP TO *FROM HERE WE GO SUBLIME* (ALSO CHECK THE NEW REMIX ALBUM!), **JOKER**'S AND **MARTYN**'S ENORMOUSLY FRESH TAKES ON DUBSTEP, DISCO FIENDS **HOLY GHOST!**'S MUCH-BALLYHOOD SECOND AT-BAT, AND **HUDSON MOHAWKE**'S DEBUT LP FOR WARP ALL HAD US GLUED TO OUR COLLECTIVE HEADPHONES, AND GAVE US MORE THAN A LITTLE EXCITEMENT FOR THINGS TO COME. SO WITH THAT, WE GIVE YOU FIVE OF OUR FAVORITES FOR 2009—AND A SHOT OF HOPE FOR THE YEAR AHEAD. — *THE XLR8R STAFF*

WORDS JOE COLLY PHOTOS DEVILLE

HOLD-

ING

ROU-

RTI-

WITH HIS GROWING
REPUTATION—AND THE PROMISE
OF A DEBUT FULL-LENGTH
—BRISTOL'S **JOKER** TAKES IT
ONE DAY AT A TIME.

THE THINGS THAT GOT JOKER THROUGH 2009

1. Riding my bike
2. Having a good manager
3. Spending loads of money on food and cooking
4. Having loads of sex
5. Drinking Somersby cider



Months before he'll complete his debut album and probably longer until it will reach listeners, Liam McLean is holed up in his home studio, stressed. A string of thrilling singles has branded the 20-year-old Bristolian, known as Joker, dubstep's next great producer, and the pressure that accompanies that title is clearly wearing on him. Mostly, though, he just misses his bicycle. "I used to ride my bike a lot," he says. "Do dirt-jumping and stuff. But within the past few months, things have gotten hectic and I haven't ridden my bike for ages. Couldn't say the last time I've been on it. I'm just stuck in my room or stuck in a club or stuck on a plane. I'm pretty mind-rocked."

That might seem like an odd complaint for a guy who seems to have the world at his fingertips, but Joker isn't your average artist. With a shyness that borders on the defiant, he is, like Brian Wilson or Burial before him, a studio rat with perfectionist tendencies (and very possibly a genius streak), the kind of dude who prefers quietly making beats in his bedroom to just about anything else. He likes movies and cooking, and isn't too thrilled about playing live sets ("Right now it pays the bills," he tells us). So how did Joker come to be seen as the man to possibly redefine dubstep and help carve out a new subgenre—wonky—in the process? First, remember that he's been making tunes since he was 14.

Joker came up in Bristol, the culture-rich port city in Southwest England—home to such greats as Robert Wyatt, Portishead, and Massive Attack—where he still resides today. Feasting on a healthy diet of grime and garage at a young age, Joker joined a hip-hop crew as its resident DJ around 14 and quickly saw an opening for his burgeoning production skills. "I seen them start to make tunes and I thought, 'If I'm going to be the DJ for them, I could, like, be the producer as well,'" he says. "So that's kind of when it started." But even then, Joker felt like there was something missing in the records he was buying and spinning—an opening for him to inject his own style. "I would get to a certain bit [of a track] and wish that things would go on a bit longer or have extra sounds I'd never heard," he says.





Eventually that urge to hear fuller and more exciting sounds would result in the creation of Joker's own material, and a stunning series of 12" singles that combined modern dubstep with Nintendo blip, '80s funk, and '90s hip-hop. Singles trickled out over a few years, beginning with 2007's "Stuck in the System," notable for its crisp melodies and marriage of grimy low-end wallop with lush orchestration, and "Snake Eater," which ran videogame samples through Neptunes bounce. The tracks dovetailed with the rise of similar sounds in the UK and abroad—a thread can be woven through the work of Glasgow's Hudson Mohawke and Rustie, as well as Hyperdub's Darkstar—which prompted UK journalist (and occasional *XLR8R* scribe) Martin Clark to name the budding movement "wonky," characterizing its mid-range as "being hijacked by off-kilter, unstable synths." Meanwhile, Joker's cuts were growing stronger and more singular with each release, but it wasn't until recently that folks outside Bristol began to take notice of his prodigious talent.

If there are two tracks that put Joker on the international map, they are "Purple City" (a collaboration with pal James "Ginz" Ginzburg) and "Digidesign," both released this year on Joker's Kapsize imprint and Hyperdub, respectively. Alongside Joy Orbison's ebullient "Hyph Mngo," they represent the most exhilarating dubstep-affiliated tracks of 2009, and though traces of their parent genre remain, the songs ultimately represent a new brand of future-pop that seems equally suitable for the clubs as it does headphones. "It's sort of like dubstep meets hip-hop meets R&B meets grime meets funk, if that makes sense," Joker says of his own work. Part of the appeal of the material is inscrutable—the way he's able to twist and bend synth lines into compelling melodies—but part of it is simple structure: He likes a good hook. "I just can't stand shit that sounds like one tone; it doesn't bring you nowhere," he says. The other component is his commitment to using what he calls "real" equipment, namely hardware over software.

"I used to make my tunes in Reason," he explains. "But when I listened to, like, more established music in the scene, there was a big difference in quality in how wide the sound was—just sonically massive. There was a certain point in Reason that it just wouldn't go past. I think that's where you have to come out of the computer." It's not about what you can't do with

software, Joker says, but that there's a higher quality of sound he's able to achieve with physical equipment. "For instance, if I have to get a sine wave with a square wave on top of it, just for, like, a simple bass, the difference between that coming from a hardware and a software would just sound completely different," he explains. But even if he's been able to refine the nuts and bolts of song creation, that doesn't mean tracks like "Digidesign" come easy.

And, of course, there's that album to think about. "I've been working on it every day but I'm going to stop that now," says Joker. "It kind of puts me in a certain working mode where I'm trying too hard. So I'm just going to relax and make beats as normal and then figure out the album when I've got a certain amount of tracks together." But that might be easier said than done. There's a note of exasperation in his voice when he talks about the record, and with a busy touring schedule and more than a few remix commissions on the table, time is short. "There's just no time for rest," he says. And part of the weight of expectation, it seems, is self-imposed. He turns to his computer to check the status of the as-yet-untitled LP. "I've got a folder called 'Album' and there are 119 files in that folder. I probably like one of them."

With that kind of quality control, one gets the sense that the Joker full-length could very well exceed expectations; it's just a matter of getting there. Joker knows what he wants it to sound like but won't give away too much ("I'm not good at explaining tunes, definitely not my own tunes," he says). He knows he wants it to be a capital-A album. "I want it to be very listenable instead of just straight tear-up-the-clubs kind of shit. With, like, a beginning, middle, and end—you can listen to it all the way through." In the meantime, though, he's simply looking for equilibrium between the life offered to him by dubstep superstardom and his much quieter one in Bristol. "It's a sacrifice," he says. "I'm still trying to find the right balance of me being okay and doing the things I want to with music." •

myspace.com/thejokerproductions

WORDS JOE COLLY PHOTOS RAGNAR SCHMUCK

FIELD

SPECIAL
LIST

KOMPAKT STALWART AXEL WILLNER FACED THE PRESSURES OF FOLLOWING UP A
BREAKTHROUGH ALBUM BY MAKING ANOTHER GREAT ONE.

THE THINGS THAT GOT AXEL
WILLNER THROUGH 2009

1. My girlfriend
2. My Roland SH-5 synth
3. My record collection
4. Good gigs
5. The addition of Jesper Skarin to The Field's live show





Axel Willner and I are talking about movies—horror movies, to be exact—over Skype. He’s in Stockholm, Sweden and I’m in Brooklyn. The soft-spoken producer behind The Field’s chopped-up, ambient-leaning techno, I’m learning, is quite the zombie-flick buff. He’s got a thing for George A. Romero (*Dawn of the Dead*, *Night of the Living Dead*) and has spent recent downtime revisiting the work of John Carpenter. He lets me in on some obscure gems to check out, tells me which actors and directors to avoid. He clearly knows his shit. Then he surprises me. “But I’m a sucker for rom-coms, too,” he says.

“For what?”
 “Rom-coms. Romantic comedies!” Willner politely exclaims in his heavy Swedish accent. “Like the Farrelly Brothers. I like a good comedy where you can really laugh. And if it has a romantic touch to it, that’s even better.” I wasn’t expecting that at all, but the more we talk, the more it makes sense. Willner’s a man of intriguing contradictions (a hardcore kid gone techno, a slasher-movie fan with a soft-spot for the romantic) and also just a really nice, down-to-earth dude. The kind of guy you want to hang out with. Somehow I totally get how he’d dig *Knocked Up*.

Willner came up as a punk in Stockholm, back when the boundaries between rock and electronic music weren’t quite so blurred as they are today. Early on, he had an innate fascination with techno. “When you were a 13-year-old teenager and you were punk, you weren’t really allowed to listen to that stuff. Even though I always found it very interesting,” he explains. His appreciation of early Warp singles eventually led to a lifelong love affair with the buoyant bliss-outs of Wolfgang Voigt’s renowned Gas LPs, and after several years honing his own sound (which is, in many ways, informed by Gas) he quietly submitted a demo to Kompakt, the label Voigt co-founded.

Folks at the venerated minimal-techno imprint heard something in that tape and didn’t hesitate to scoop him up. In 2007, while spending his days working in a liquor shop in Stockholm, Willner released *From Here We Go Sublime*, a record that found international acclaim for its fresh re-imagining of Kompakt’s previously perfected but then-inert (some might even say stale) sound. Tracks such as “A Paw in My Face” and “The Little Heart Beats So Fast”—with their looped and spliced rhythms

set to dreamy, atmospheric backdrops—helped to further smear the distinction between headphone and club music. You could say he breathed new life into Kompakt. At the very least, he had become its breakout star.

Fast-forward to 2009, and life’s different for Willner. For one, he doesn’t have to sell booze to cover his rent anymore. “It’s been quite a big change. I decided to quit my daytime job and I’m just making music full-time now,” he tells me. “And I moved from Stockholm to Berlin. The actual fact of just playing live a lot and making music often is the biggest change, really.” He spent the better chunk of the past two years touring the world with *From Here We Go Sublime*, playing alongside acts such as Battles and LCD Soundsystem, and slowly perfecting his live act. During that time, The Field’s stage show underwent a structural transformation; instead of just rocking a laptop, Willner began incorporating live players into the mix. “Live drums, live bass, keyboards. No computer anymore except for samplers,” he explains.

After his tour schedule wound down at the end of 2008, Willner started to think about the follow-up to *From Here We Go Sublime*, and was inspired by the looseness he found while performing. With a few of his bandmates, he decamped to Adelsö, a remote island outside of Stockholm to lay down the tracks that would become *Yesterday and Today*, his 2009 record for Kompakt/Anti-. “We went out to a deserted old school on this small island,” he says. “We stayed there for a week and just recorded all day and night.” The resulting album, while unmistakably The Field, is marked by a shift towards warmer, more organic textures and longer tracks that showcase a newfound knack for deep grooves and spectacular climactic builds.

“It’s the same, but, in a way, different,” says Willner of *Yesterday and Today*. “Even though The Field is very much loop-based music, we moved away from the laptop as much as we could.” He used some of the same instruments (a Finnish tracking program called Buzz is still his go-to software) but was able to draw more from them.

Yesterday and Today does reveal a wider exploration of musical styles. “Everybody’s Got to Learn Sometime,” which climbs for several minutes before unfurling into heavy, interlocking grooves, bears resemblance to the repetitive structures of ‘70s



Krautrock acts Neu! and Cluster. “Leave It” runs the glitchiness of *From Here We Go Sublime* through a disco filter, its bouncy propulsion recalling the extended jams of Larry Levan. There’s an emphasis here on potency: fewer songs but longer, funkier ones. Willner says that wasn’t intentional. “It just turned out that way,” he claims. “Partly because of the live jamming. And I’ve always

liked longer tracks. I like records where one side is one whole track.

“I wanted it to have a new depth with the live musicians,” he says. Indeed, part of the record’s appeal is a naturalness that wasn’t present on prior Field records. He credits the laid-back recording process and the use of low-tech gear. “It was very easygoing and not super-structured. Very loose,” says

Willner. “Also, I got back to actual hardware; started collecting more analog stuff. So that’s probably why the sound is a bit more organic or has a disco or Kraut touch to it. And to be perfectly honest, I was a little tired of the techno scene and, in a way, wanted to do some other kind of music.” ●

Yesterday and Today Remixed is out this month on Kompakt/Anti-.
myspace.com/thefieldsthlm

EMD-
LESS

FRUIT

NETHERLANDS TRANSPLANT **MARTYN** SETTLES INTO THE US
AND TAKES DUBSTEP ON THE RIDE OF ITS LIFE.

WORDS WALTER WASACZ PHOTOS SHAUN BLOODWORTH





Could there be an alternate universe of rhythm and sound? One set free from genre and style constraints, where dance music is smart, intuitive, and fun again? Count Martyn as a believer. Maybe this inclusive, universal approach to making music has to do with his backstory: Martijn Deykers' roots are in Eindhoven, a 900-year-old city in the south of the Netherlands, urban at its core but part of a sprawling and culturally diverse metropolitan area called Brabant Stad, home to over two million people. The Eindhoven Design Academy is known for its industrial and interior innovations and has been dubbed "the school of cool." The region is populated with young, educated cultural explorers willing to try almost anything.

"I started raving when I was a kid, maybe in 1992," says Deykers by phone from his present home in Northern Virginia, where he moved over a year ago to be with his American wife. "At first it was all Chicago and Detroit: Derrick May, Carl Craig, Stacey Pullen played some of the first parties I went to. It definitely inspired me, but when I started DJing a few years later I turned to drum & bass."

Deykers helped launch a nationwide D&B club night called Red Zone, first in his hometown and then in Rotterdam, where he lived for five years. When it came time to choose his professional name, he took a conscious but tricky step by simply calling himself Martyn.

"If I call myself by own name, with no alias, I have nothing to hide behind," he says. "Quality control is a part of everything I do. I think hard before I commit myself to something."

Evolving from DJ and promoter to producer in the early to mid-'00s, Martyn first began making D&B tracks, not surprisingly, until they started to morph into something else quite different. His "Broken" b/w "Shadowcasting" 12" in 2007 was a companion piece to other trailblazing works that began to alter dubstep culture from both inside and outside regional power centers in London and Bristol. Its playful-soulful-funky rhythm patterns looked backward to jungle, pushed the refresh button on house, and sounded like the future of techno—all at once.

"I was not a dubstep artist, but I was listening to

what Burial and Kode9 were doing," Martyn says. Other inspirations appear to be Detroit mega-talents Theo Parrish and Kenny Dixon Jr. with a twist of the late J Dilla on the 3/4 periphery. Fellow Dutchman Dave Huismans (a.k.a. 2562 and A Made Up Sound) trended in similar directions, as did Leeds-based Hessele Audio's Pangaea, Ramadanman, and Untold; Appleblim, Pinch, and Peverelist in Bristol; and the undisputed champion and nerve center of UK dance music innovation, Kode9's South London Hyperdub imprint.

Martyn's star has continued to rise with dubstep's incremental growth around the world. But still he stands apart. His solo dance twelves ("Velvet" b/w "Twenty Four" and "Natural Selection" b/w "Vancouver") on his own 3024 label, on Applepips ("All I have is Memories" b/w "Suburbia"), and a split release with 2562 on Tectonic ("Yet" b/w "Control") turn heads on massive systems in super-clubs or on personal iTunes playlists. His other collabs and remix product—including work with Flying Lotus, Efdemin, Scuba, Ramadanman, TRG, and Fever Ray—reveal him to be an impressive team player. He can put his foot to the floor or take the backseat; whatever he has to do to make the track stronger.

Martyn's life has shifted to the high-speed lane, moving his 3024 label business to the Washington, DC area, flying to Europe for club dates and festivals, and building a career in North America, now as a newly naturalized US citizen. His first full-length, *Great Lengths*, was released in April to widespread praise by critics, he has a track ("Megadrive Generation") that recombines his multiple influences into a near-perfect mid-tempo raw funk jam on *5*, the fifth-anniversary compilation of Hyperdub, and has just completed a new mix CD—*Fabric 50*, no less—set to drop in January. The mix includes tracks or remixes (some of them exclusives) by Actress, Ben Klock, Redshape, 2562, Kode9, Roska, and Joy Orbison alongside several Martyn originals.

"I really like working with kindred spirits, people who set their standards high," Martyn says. "You can get something great, something that didn't exist before, when you bring elements together in the right way. It's what I wanted to do on this mix. It's what I try to do on all my projects." ●



WORDS ZAINAB JAMA. PHOTOS SHAUN BLOODWORTH & GIVE UP ART

REI

GLASWEGIAN BEAT KID HUDSON MOHAWKE DELIVERS ONE OF THE YEAR'S MOST ANTICIPATED LPS.



REI

A FEW THINGS THAT GOT HUD MO THROUGH 2009

1. Being gently electrocuted every time I touch my MacBook
2. Butter spin-off names from Fineart & Sum: *Lurpak Shakur*, *Tina Churner*, *Olivio Daysoul*, and *Spread Perry*
3. Dallas BBQ Restaurant in NYC
4. The I Am T-Pain app
5. The biggest Lego set ever, the Taj Mahal





It's hard to imagine that at age 13—when he produced his first beat—Hudson Mohawke's music career was already five years deep. The Glaswegian boy wonder actually started mixing when he was eight, on a “shitty little hi-fi turntable and cassette deck,” and since then it's been nothing but upward trajectory for the man born Ross Birchard, whose debut LP, *Butter*, was just released on UK powerhouse label Warp Records. We sat down with HudMo at Warp's London office to get the lowdown on everything that's led to this point, what else he's been feeling this past year, and what lies ahead.

What was your general introduction to music?

Hudson Mohawke: I grew up in Glasgow, but my dad is actually from LA. He used to have a radio show, actually, in the mid-to-late '80s. It was like an American chart show; lots of vinyl in the house. I had my own shitty little hi-fi turntable and cassette player, so I would try and mix between the two, rewind the tape and play a record. It was a basic set-up, but that's what I learnt to DJ with. A little after that, when I was 12, I got my first proper turntables. I say “proper,” but they were super-basic, and at the same time, a game on the PlayStation came out called *Music [Music Creation for the PlayStation]*, which was like my first experience with making music, I guess. It's like an Atari sequencer, and Atari's is the original. It was a simplified version and very versatile. Then the follow-up was *Music 2000*. On that one, you could take the disc out and put in an audio CD and sample off it, and that's how I first learnt to sample. It was completely laborious and stupidly complicated, even more than it is on, like, the original samplers. It was really time-consuming to find that little bit you wanted, but it was really good training for sampling.

I also got some mixtapes from my cousin. Rave and jungle was huge in Scotland at the time, so he gave me some tapes that had lots of scratching and cutting—that was a really big attraction for me and I really got into that scene, the sort of turntablist thing, and I started to do some DJ battles off the back of that when I was 13 or 14. I was 14 when I first did the DMC and got to be a UK finalist. I didn't win the UK—they'd never let a fucking Scottish guy win it.

What was the first track you made, and how did you make it?

I used some really dark, stupid drum and bass names, but I don't even have any of that stuff anymore. My house got flooded in 2000, so I lost everything I was working on up to that point. So I started again from there. I guess it helped in a way, 'cos I got some insurance money so I was able to buy some better DJ equipment.

Do you play any instruments?

Not really. I did a few years of extracurricular drum lessons; lots of pissing around on keyboard, but no real training. I used to play recorder like everyone else in primary school, too. I did [play instruments] on a few of my records, but very badly. I can train myself to a reasonable standard.

How did *Butter* come together?

Basically, I got picked up by Warp in 2007, and it was such a huge deal that I didn't make any music for a while after that 'cos I couldn't get to grips with the idea. I didn't really have a back catalog, and only had a few releases before that. And then to have potentially massive exposure with such a prestigious label, it freaked me out for a long time. It was about nine months after I signed that I almost couldn't do anything, but I got over that eventually and from there it took me about seven, eight, nine months to cut it all together. Most of it's all new, except for a few old ones that I worked on again.

What hardware/software did you use to make it?

I've got a really simple set-up. I've got Fruity Loops. It isn't considered a professional set-up, but it's what I've always used and never really wanted to move on to anything else. It does everything I need it to do, and it's really quick. Also, I bought a few keyboards, an '80s one and a Korg board. The whole set-up is really simple: mainly my computer, and turntable for sampling. I recently bought a talk box, but haven't figured it out yet.

Tell me about the collaborations on the LP. How did you get together with Dam-Funk and Olivier Daysoul?

Well, I met Olivier through a mutual friend of ours called Oddisee, who's an MC/producer from Washington, DC. Olivier is a friend of his, so Oddisee played me some of Olivier's tracks that I liked. They were more on the traditional neo-soul kind of tip, but he had a really versatile voice, and after he introduced us, it became apparent he wanted some more fucked-up-sounding stuff. We did our first thing in '07. He's great to work with and he lives in Oxford now.

With Dam-Funk, I was a fan of his, and had been in touch with Stones Throw. I had a track of his that had his vocals on it that I really liked. You know, he's not an incredible singer, but he has a sort of charm, which really appealed to me, and I wanted to see if he was up for doing something. We were gonna do some instrumental collaborations together, but I wanted to do some vocals, and luckily he was up for it.



Who would be your dream guests to work with?

I used to do everything with vocals in mind, but I'd always get two complaints—or suggestions, if you will. One was from the vocalists, which was, 'Yeah, we like it, but it's too busy for us to lay vocals on top.' And the other side was people saying they really like the instrumental tracks and they're fine as they are. I'd still love to do vocals, and I have plans to do more vocal stuff. I've got a few things in the pipeline, but in the very initial stages. Hopefully gonna do some work for Erykah Badu, and there's a possibility of doing some Chris Brown a while down the line.

Why did you call the record *Butter*?

It came from a few places: Mainly from a '90s description of R&B, and the idea of melting sounds, and the sort of contrast as butter as a solid object that takes on different forms... and is part of an ingredient to make bigger things. But basically I liked the name.

People describe your sound as everything from aqua-crunk-step to glitch-hop and beyond, but what would you call it?

I mean it kinda pisses me off that I have to call it anything, but I know at the same time that I had to have be called something, 'cos it can't go unnamed. The main problem I have is people calling my music “wonky.” Just from 'anything that's not straight is wonky, mate,' [*in Mockney accent*]. I dunno. Sometimes I used the term “turbo soul.” There's a lot of really shit names for it.

What do you think of the new gen?

I like the things that are coming out of that label Hotflush. I really like Untold, too. But at the same time, there's a lot of people who get jumped on when they have one good track. People are heralded as this amazing new sound when they haven't really done anything, but it's not their fault—it's the media's. They just want something to hype over, so they just jump on a new craze.

What's been the highlight of your career so far?

I don't know. Pretty much for the last year or so, I've been in a constant state of amazing shit happening all the time, so I'm really taking it all in; I'm a bit overwhelmed by it all. Sometimes I think, “Is this really happening? What the fuck is going on?” It's constantly surprising.

If you weren't doing music, what would you be doing now?

I have no clue, honestly; I never wanted to do anything else. I'm so lucky to do this and make a living from it, 'cos I would be on the rocks if I wasn't doing this. I was working in the Sub Club in Glasgow, and I found the manual labor torture, but the music was great.

Butter is out now on Warp.myspace.com/hudsonmo

WORDS SHAWN REYNALDO PHOTOS SHAWN BRACKBILL

HOLY GHOST!

VOYAGE

AS THEIR DEBUT ALBUM NEARS COMPLETION, THE LIFELONG FRIENDS FROM NYC'S HOLY GHOST! DELVE INTO DISCO'S PAST WITHOUT IRONY.

A FEW THINGS THAT GOT HOLY GHOST! THROUGH 2009

1. Calvi on the Rocks festival in Corsica
2. 30 Rock/Curb Your Enthusiasm/Mad Men
3. Books by Richard Price
4. Tacos from Taco Santana in Brooklyn
5. Our modular synthesizer

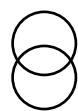


FROM LEFT: NICK MILHISER AND ALEX FRANKEL

Plenty of bands sport members with long personal histories together, but Alex Frankel and Nick Milhiser of NYC disco outfit Holy Ghost! really go way back—the guys have been friends for 20 years. Meeting as wee tots at what they describe as a “liberal, weird school” on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, it didn’t take long for the pair to begin collaborating musically. “Our first band was Miss Preston’s elective rock band, which was in the fourth grade,” says Milhiser. “It was in a storage cage,” adds Frankel. “We played classics like ‘Lean on Me,’ ‘59th Street Bridge,’ and then, as a reward for learning all these songs, we got to write and perform one of our own.” Apparently Miss Preston had quite an effect on the boys, as Frankel and Milhiser have

been working together on music ever since. In high school they formed Automato, a six-piece live hip-hop group that operated in a similar sonic space as fellow East Coast outfits like The Roots and A Tribe Called Quest. Automato’s 2004 self-titled debut album was produced by the DFA and received a smattering of critical acclaim, but the group eventually dissolved, leaving Frankel and Milhiser to soldier on as a duo.

“The second Automato broke up, Alex and I continued working on music together, initially with the idea that we were going to keep doing hip-hop stuff,” says Milhiser. “But we didn’t have a rapper, so Alex started singing.” Soon thereafter, the tempo increased, pop arrangements came into play, and Holy Ghost! was born. The duo cites the influence of DFA producers James Murphy and Tim Goldsworthy as an obvious



factor in their move toward disco and electronic music, but their listening habits had always been diverse, even in their younger, baseball-cap-to-the-side hip-hop days. "I bought [Daft Punk's] *Homework* when it came out, when I was like, 15," says Milhiser. "[Growing up in New York,] the same kids who went to Pavement or Lyricists Lounge shows were also the same kids who went to raves."

Late 2007 saw the release of "Hold On," Holy Ghost!'s debut single on DFA. A near-perfect slice of pop-disco, "Hold On" was simultaneously modern and true to the classic analog-synth work of disco legends like Giorgio Moroder. The track thrust the duo into the spotlight and made them in-demand remixers—Panthers, Curses! (a.k.a. Drop the Lime), In Flagranti, Cut Copy, Phoenix, and even electronic music legend Moby have all come calling for their services. (Frankel actually worked as Moby's assistant for a time, although he claims "there was no drycleaning, but I did return a DVD of *Twin Peaks* once." Overall, he describes it as an "awesome experience.") Not surprisingly, all the remix work, not to mention the sudden demand for their DJ services around the globe, has left precious little time for producing new Holy Ghost! material. The group's second single, another offering of pitch-perfect electro-disco entitled "I Will Come Back," was only released this past summer—strangely enough, as a free download on the Mountain Dew-sponsored Green Label Sound label. "We were anxious and nervous about working with a corporation," says Frankel before adding, "[it was an] amazing experience." Milhiser adds, "We were right about to release 'I Will Come Back,' just as a second 12-inch on DFA." Frankel continues, "The package was ready to go, and they were able to come in last minute, give it a big push, and offer support that DFA couldn't do on its own. Working together, DFA and [Green Label Sound] proved to be a really good team."

Questions of distribution model aside, the fact remains that to date, Holy Ghost! has only released two proper singles and a number of remixes—a fact Frankel and Milhiser are certainly aware of. "We work very, very slowly," begins Milhiser before Frankel cuts in, "There is more! There's more on my computer. We've spent the past two years making an album." He continues, "When 'Hold On' came out, it wasn't like that was the lead single to an album. That was the lead single to the project—there was nothing [else]. We joke about it ourselves—when we only had 'Hold On,' that was even worse because then people would be like, 'You only have one song out,' and we'd be playing somewhere like Israel, and they'd be like, 'How the fuck did you get to come here?'"

These days Holy Ghost! has more of a discography, but the production focus has shifted entirely to finishing their debut album, tentatively slated for release sometime in 2010. Production is something the duo takes seriously, as they've also acquired a budding reputation as gear hounds.

Frankel and Milhiser began seriously collecting equipment as teenagers in their Automato days, as Frankel explains, "We signed a record deal and we had a little bit of a gear budget and simultaneously we got into Radiohead. I blame [the record company] and Nigel Godrich largely for our gear obsession." That obsession continues to this day, as the pair has amassed an impressive arsenal of instruments and studio gear. Favorite items include Roland Space Echo tape delays, '70s-era DBX162 and DBX165 compressors, Yamaha CP60, CP70, and Rhodes electric pianos, and their modular synth.

While Frankel and Milhiser openly cop to their passion for vintage studio equipment and musical instruments, there is a method to their madness. "We just don't like the way modern records sound," says Milhiser. "Records made between 1975 and 1985 are just the best-sounding recordings ever made, and a large part of that has to do with the equipment that was used, so that's where a big part of our obsession with gear comes from." And despite their studio-geek tendencies, the guys are not trying to simply re-hash the days of disco past. Milhiser explains, "We're not trying to sound retro, or old for the sake of sounding old." While elements of nostalgia factor in to the creative process and the guys admit to borrowing ideas from their favorite disco and early electro records, Frankel boldly proclaims that Holy Ghost! makes music "without irony." That even includes when the guys are enlisting the vocal services of Yacht Rock legend Michael McDonald, who sings the hook on one of the tracks from their forthcoming album. "His vocals are insane," says Frankel. "One day on the 12-inch we should just make a McDonald-pella that's just his [vocal] tracks because they are insane-sounding."

Speaking of insanity, besides finishing the debut full-length, Holy Ghost! is also in the midst of tackling another challenge—performing live. Much of the band's vintage equipment isn't exactly tour-ready, so the gear acquisition is now focused on smaller, stable, and functional items for the road. Rather than relying on pre-recorded tracks and performing a glorified DJ set, Holy Ghost! is attempting to keep the live show as 'live' as possible. "It's going to be a five-person band, everyone playing, everyone using basically every available limb," Milhiser explains. Frankel adds, "Some of it's very hard because it's like playing one part with your left hand, another with the right hand, and singing at the same time. We brought in these guys Tyler [Blake] and Michael [David] who are in the band Classixx, and they are doing a lot of the hard stuff." While there are no concrete tour dates yet, Holy Ghost! does have one confirmed show—at next year's Calvi on the Rocks festival in Corsica, a "heaven on earth" spot where they DJed earlier this year. "They asked us to [come back and] play live and we said yes without having any idea how to play live," says Frankel. "You can't say no to this festival." Milhiser adds with a laugh, "And there's no money involved."

"I Will Come Back" is out now on Green Label Sound.
myspace.com/holyghostnyc



TO READ THE FULL TRANSCRIPT OF OUR INTERVIEW WITH HOLY GHOST!, VISIT XLR8R.COM/130EXTRAS.



Ur a Jerk.

Photos by Mathew Scott

Over the past year, a new hip-hop subgenre has bubbled up from the streets of Los Angeles. Known as **jerkin'**, the scene is largely populated by internet-savvy, skinny-jeans-wearing teens whose favorite artists are often like-minded young MCs and producers who operate almost exclusively on MySpace and only perform at raucous all-ages shows for throngs of wilding-out fans. With a minimal, synth-driven sound reminiscent of Bay Area rappers The Pack, jerkin' has crept up and down

the West Coast, primarily on the back of underground hits like "You're a Jerk" by LA's New Boyz. But apart from the music, the jerkin' movement has gained just as much attention for its youthful exuberance, bright colors, skate-inspired style, and coordinated dance moves that often resemble the Running Man in reverse. With the help of Angeleno Sharriff Hassan—who's currently producing a jerkin' feature film—*XLR8R* brought together three different jerkin' crews—Team Dummy, Kream Kids, and

UCLA Jerks—on a Sunday afternoon at Stoner Park in West Los Angeles. Photographer Mathew Scott documented the crews doing what they do... and captured a bit of what being a jerk is all about. *Shawn Reynaldo*



BB THE JERK FROM UCLA JERKS WITH
YOUNG ACE FROM KREAM KIDS



ANTHONY
FROM TEEN DUMMY



LEE LEE
FROM KREAM KIDS





TRASTAR
FROM KREAM KIDS

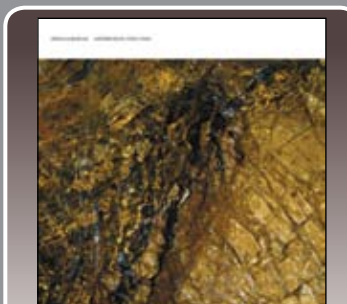


NICK FROM KREAM KIDS



CHEF & RAMADANMAN
Dubstep Allstars Vol. 07 2CD

Volume 7 of Tempa's highly-acclaimed series continues as **Chef** and **Ramadanman** take the reins on this double disc expedition. An impeccable track selection, featuring fresh cuts from **Skream**, **Martyn**, **Benga**, **Untold**, **Scuba**, **Peeverlist**, **RSD** and many more, make this an essential dubstep collection.



OREN AMBARCHI
Intermission 2000-2008 CD

A collection of tracks from compilations and limited-edition vinyl releases, many available on CD for the first time. These are special anomalies in the vast catalog of material from Australian sound artist **Oren Ambarchi**, underpinned by his trademark deep guitar tones heard on his work with **Sunn O))), Fennesz**, and others.



MARCUS NASTY
Rinse: 10 CD

Grime legend **Marcus Nasty (N.A.S.T.Y. Crew)** documents the most current and vibrant evolution of Britain's funky scene with an hour of all killer/no filler rump-shakers. Exclusive tracks and in-demand club smashes from the likes of **Geeneus**, **Roska**, **Lil Silva**, and more, mixed with Nasty's high-octane style.



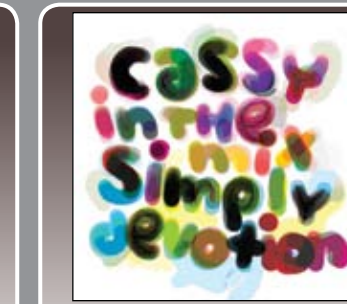
GRISTLEISM
Black/Red/Chrome Soundbox

Christiaan Virant (FM3) and **Throbbing Gristle** team up to create the bastard offspring of the world-famous *Buddha Machine*. The **GRISTLEISM** soundbox features 13 original loops of TG's signature experimental noise and industrial drone. Available in 3 colors, the palm-sized unit features a volume control, pitch-shift, and twice the frequency range of the original *Buddha Machine* in a built-in speaker guaranteed to fuck your mind.



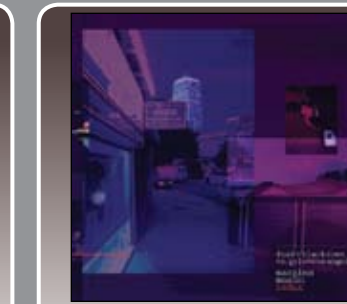
MOONBOOTICA
Save The Night 2CD

Germany's premier all-night-dance-party duo **Moonbootica** (aka **KoweSix** and **tobitob**) present a high energy dance mix in this special 2CD package, encompassing everything between electro, house, disco, funk, and more. Artists like **John Daly**, **Bodymovin**, and **The Faint** highlight nearly 3 hours of finely-mixed auditory pleasures.



CASSY *Simply Devotion - Cassy In The Mix* CD

With a secure sense of the seductive power of house music, Berlin's renowned DJ **Cassy** lives at the interfaces between jazzy deep house and geometrically-structured techno, enchanting us with 70 minutes of sensual sound hypnosis. Featuring **Baby Ford**, **Minimal Man**, **Ralph Falcon**, **Anton Zap**, and many more.



DUSK + BLACKDOWN VS. GRIEVOUS ANGEL
Margins Music: Redux CD

Dusk + Blackdown's debut album, a crucial and enduring dubstep release, gets a highly-anticipated full-length rework by dubstep and ragga techno innovator **Grievous Angel (Paul Meme)**. "...the strength of *Margins*' intricate, intimate structure makes it dubstep's most successful long-player to date, and a sure-fire contender for album of the year." —*Dusted*



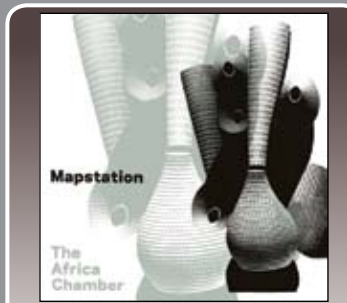
MATIAS AGUAYO
Ay Ay Ay CD/2LP

Combining Latin harmonies, organic rhythms, and elements of traditional African music, **Matias Aguayo** coaxes you to get up and dance. An ambitious, unclassifiable new album that will appeal to fans of **Animal Collective**, **DJ Mujava**, and more. "*Aguayo will change the way you think about dance music.*" —*Los Angeles Weekly*



COBRA KILLER
Uppers And Downers CD/LP

Peaches never had the balls to record anything as defiant and unpredictable as **Cobra Killer's** latest album, chock-full of pounding, crazed electropunk/new-wave mishmash. **Jon Spencer**, **Thurston Moore**, and **J. Mascis** guest. "...coming off like **Nina Hagen** fronting **Einstürzende Neubauten** with **Level 242** warming up backstage." —*Fake Jazz*



MAPSTATION
Let The Africa Chamber CD/LP

Mapstation's aural collages expand on an exploration of would-be African sounds, from the digital replication of jungle ambience to broad soundscapes and analog percussion. Guests include **Nicholas Addo-Netey (Fela Kuti)** and **Thomas Klein (Kreidler)**. "*Schneider alchemises his music into something special, where a DIY Afro fantasia perfectly merges with a wider range of sounds.*" —*The Wire*



FUCKPONY
Let The Love Flow CD

Jay Haze's second full-length under his **Fuckpony** moniker shows the producer's more soulful side, with boundary-crossing house for ravers in love and raved-out lovers. Guests **Laila Tov** and **Chela Simone** accompany super-tight rhythms and sharp-edged pop you could light a match with.



NICOLAS COLLINS
Devil's Music CD/CD-ROM/2LP

EM Records reissues electro-acoustic circuit bender **Nicolas Collins'** live radio sampling masterpiece from 1986, a time capsule of the mid-'80s New York City airwaves, acclaimed by **Philip Sherburne** as "an early template for techno." CD version includes a bonus live video and a software version of Collins' original hardware circuitry.

ALBUM REVIEWS

11/09



BOYS NOIZE

Power

Boysnoize/GER/CD

VITALIC

Flashmob

Different-PIAS/BEL/CD



TWO ELECTRO-HOUSE GIANTS
FAIL TO ASSUAGE FEARS
THAT THEIR GENRE HAS HIT
A CREATIVE WALL.

The rise of electro-house marked an interesting shift in electronic music, as youthful DJs and fans, largely fueled by a burgeoning network of music blogs perpetually offering the latest wave of raved-up indie-dance tunes, threatened to reinvent dance music culture for Generation Web 2.0. Within a short time, genre leaders like **Justice** and **Simian Mobile Disco** were hailed as new-school pop savants, labels such as **Ed Banger** and **Kitsuné** became electronic music powerhouses, and the bombastic sounds of electro-house flooded onto dancefloors around the globe. Yet the very medium which had nurtured this movement—the internet—soon threatened to kill it, as bedroom producers and sonic copycats, driven by fantasies of following in their new-found heroes' footsteps and becoming the internet's "next big thing" themselves, let loose a spew of cookie-cutter productions. Predictably, electro-house found one formula and stuck to it—distorted synths, heavy bass, "party, love, dance, party" themes, and *ad nauseam* four-on-the-floor beats. And with each successive banger, the genre furthered its transformation from *cause célèbre* to punchline.

So now, as electro-house stands on its creative last legs, **Boys Noize** and **Vitalic**, two respected veterans of the scene, are each releasing new albums. While hopes run high that these guys could breathe some creative life back into the sound, their records only serve to perpetuate the notion that electro-house has grown stagnant. *Power*, the sophomore full-length from rave-obsessed German producer **Alexander Ridha** (a.k.a. **Boys Noize**), finds him rehashing ideas from previous singles, remixes, and his debut album, *Oi Oi Oi*. "Contact Me," *Power's* first real rave-up, features massive synths and a robot vocal loop ripped straight from **Deadmau5'** repertoire, and the track's occasional slap 'n' pop basslines sound suspiciously like something out of **Justice's** sample bank. Not until midway through the album do we get an inkling of something unfamiliar, as the cave-drop percussion

and handclaps of "Nerve" offer a short break from the onslaught of frantic noise. The stomping "Trooper" and the more playful "Drummer" also begin with something more sonically alluring, giving the listener a vision of the new territory his music could pioneer, but these reprieves are ultimately short-lived, as **Boys Noize** seemingly itches to introduce buzzing waveforms whenever possible.

On the other hand, **Vitalic** (a.k.a. **Pascal Arbez**) has been in the game long enough to know that a good hook can go a long way. Maybe due to his history in the more song-oriented electroclash scene—his debut *Poney* EP came out on **International Deejay Gigolo** in 2001—the French beatsmith is certainly more thoughtful with his productions. Whereas younger artists tend to suffocate their listeners with claustrophobic noise and mind-numbing beats, on *Flashmob*, **Vitalic's** sophomore album, the seasoned producer manages to trade in fuzzed-out electro without sacrificing his penchant for conventional pop songwriting. The album is full of hummable pop melodies, memorable tunes, and even the occasional human voice. "Poison Lips" comes across like a **Kylie Minogue** B-side, while the cowbell percussion of "Terminateur Benelux" could be some sort of warped tribute to the fellow dancefloor acolytes of **DFA**. Still, even some of the more interesting romps on *Flashmob*, such as the vocal hook-heavy "One Above One" and the **Crystal Castles**-indebted "Your Disco Song," sound very old-hat, and any track worth repeated listens is sure to eventually be filed under "guilty pleasure" for the non-fanboys.

Despite their well-produced attempts, both **Boys Noize** and **Vitalic** seem unwilling, or perhaps unable, to avoid beating the proverbial dead horse. **Boys Noize** takes the, um, noisy front on *Power* while **Vitalic's** *Flashmob* represents the more melodic side of electro-house, but each fall back on routine more often than they further a tired sound. *Patric Fallon*



2562

Unbalance

Tectonic/UK/CD

On 2562's debut, *Aerial*, songs like "Greyscale" and "Techno Dread," both dubstep-centric meditations defined by roving basslines and gratifying percussive taps and crashes, suggested that the Dutch producer dabbled in a single color—grey. On *Unbalance*, Dave Huismans plays a bit more Pantone, weaving in classic dance sounds for a slinkier, more refined voice. Smearred keys, hovering synthetic strings, and dull acid tones creep into the mix, providing more textures for his unfolding tracks. "Flashback" buzzes and occasionally slides into a locked groove, but never loses momentum. The flinty shuffle of "Yes/No" is filled with scrapes and restraint, little strikes with varying degrees of decay and sustain. Huismans still has bass on lock, unfurling plenty of rumbling, catchy low end. Now it just anchors a slightly more ambitious and satisfying set of compositions. *Patrick Sisson*

5: FIVE YEARS OF HYPERDUB

Hyperdub/UK/2CD

Here you have it: over two hours' worth of only a fraction of the product released by Steve Goodman's (a.k.a. Kode9) London-based Hyperdub franchise. It's more than a beginner's guide, however. Re-mastered Burial tracks "Distant Lights" and "South London Boroughs" are joined by Kode9's own "9 Samurai" and steady contributions from Kevin Martin projects The Bug and King Midas Sound. Hyperdub's new 8-bit 'n' bass and wonky directions are also represented via songs from Ikonika, Quarta 300, and Darkstar, not to mention a choice cut from legit UK funky goddess Cooly G. Other highs include rolling thunder from Flying Lotus, LD, Joker, Zomby, and a funereal reinterpretation of the Specials' "Ghost Town" courtesy of Kode9 + Spaceape. *Walter Wasacz*

A GRAVE WITH NO NAME

MOUNTAIN DEBRIS

Lefse/US/CD

Largely conceived in the London bedroom studio of frontman Alex Shields, *Mountain Debris* is an impressive collection of distortion-bathed pop tunes that manages to stand out, even in an increasingly crowded lo-fi field. Combining a rough-around-the-edges pop pedigree with the warm fuzz of C86, the bleak soundscapes of vintage shoegaze, and just a hint of sweet psychedelic swirl, A Grave With No Name crafts impressively affecting songs that rarely crack the two-minute mark. It's something like Jay Reatard on Quaaludes. Whether it's woozy acoustic pop ("Lavender," "Open Water"), noisier shitgaze ("And We Parted Ways at Mt. Jade"), or stompy proto-grunge that tugs at your heartstrings (album standout "Sofia"), *Mountain Debris* is a stellar first effort. *Shawn Reynaldo*

MATIAS AGUAYO

AY AY AY

Kompakt/GER/CD

Chilean producer Matias Aguayo (formerly of Closer Musik) has created a dark carnival of an album on *Ay Ay Ay*, a restrained event with sustained creepiness underlying the celebration. Filled with thudding drums and melodies constructed from vocal tics, tones, whispers, and asides, it plumbs disorienting depths—imagine an Audion track where the corkscrew melodies have been replaced with a choir composed of the whispers from *Lost*. Lead single "Rollerskate" bobs and weaves with bubbling voices, a genius track never lacking for simplicity or propulsion, while "Koro Koro" brings a Ladysmith Black Mambazo vibe. As the party closes on "Juanita," with revelers quietly clapping and accordions taking shallow breaths, Aguayo bows out on another singular album. *Patrick Sisson*

ATLAS SOUND

LOGOS

Kranky/US/CD

Bradford Cox (a.k.a. Atlas Sound) may lead a rock band, Atlanta's Deerhunter, but on his own, he commands altogether hazier and more fragile armies. Last year's *Let the Blind Lead Those Who Can See But Cannot Feel* was all loops, electro-static, and burbling reverb—Deerhunter stuffed into a microchip. Now, with the

folk-tinged *Logos*, Cox is finally letting some air into the room—along with some friends. Animal Collective's Noah Lennox guests on "Walkabout," Stereolab's Laetitia Sadier coos over the swirling "Quick Canal," and Sasha Vine of the Sian Alice Group even shows up to play some violin. And on the sunbathed "Shelia," Cox manages something truly rare for even the most dedicated students of bedroom psychedelia: a genuine pop chorus. *John S.W. MacDonald*

BLACK DEVIL DISCO CLUB

PRESENTS: THE STRANGE NEW WORLD OF BERNARD FEVRE

Lo/UK/CD

As half of Black Devil Disco Club, Bernard Fevre decades ago invented his own stream of Italo-disco, only to vanish until a few years back. Now Fevre has rescued his own *Strange New World* from the mists of time, and we find that he long ago dialed up a psychedelic, sci-fi spin on library music, conjuring bodily thrills and spinal chills, decades before Boards of Canada mined similar terrain. Whether today's modern technology polished these tracks hardly matters, as the ace melodies, alluringly unreliable tunings, and arpeggiated bass of tracks like "Stars on Grey" stand ready to beam us to times unknown. *Rob Geary*

BLACK TO COMM

ALPHABET 1968

Type/UK/CD

On his debut for the Type label, Mark Richter departs dramatically from the more organic, drone-based recordings that his fans are used to hearing. Instead, *Alphabet 1968* relies much more on the interplay of discrete percussive elements, evident on the frantic pulsing of "Houdini Rites" and the homemade gamelan mysticism of "Musik Für Alle." Though Richter maintains his found-sound, sample-based approach to composition, especially on album closer "Hotel Friend," the more heady dirges that he is known for are presented in bits, as on the organ-swollen "Traum GmbH" and the foreboding deepness of "Void." The effort is much appreciated—one *can* get sick of drones after a while—but it's not certain that Richter's fans will be quite as enthralled with his departure. *Thomas Rees*

BODYMOVIN

BODYMOVIN

Moonbootique/GER/CD

Bodymovin, the self-titled debut album combining the efforts of German producers DJ Friction and Thomilla, maintains a head-bobbing groove while avoiding unnecessary ornamentation. With patient construction, the Stuttgart-based duo weaves a subtly textured disco landscape of analog synths, buzzy basslines, pretty female vocal accents, and occasionally crooning robot voices, as on the infectious "Yeah!" and later amid the serene oscillating sunset synths of "More & More." Halfway through the album, "Everybody" takes the funky vibe that pops up on "It Wasn't Calf" and "Hold Back" and rubs it around in the dirt with some sinister keys and deeper bass. With its blissful synths and an introspective beat, "Get Down" artfully dissipates the funk and lays the album to rest. *Lulu McAllister*

CASPA

EVERYBODY'S TALKING, NOBODY'S

LISTENING

Fabric/UK/CD

Every micro-genre of UK dance music seems to require a producer either bold or foolish enough to step out of the madly 12"-driven scene with an LP—just think how many copies of *New Forms* sit forgotten on our shelves. For the "wobbly" school of bassy, oscillator-driven dubstep, the avatar is Caspa, perpetrator of forbidding, arid monoliths that crowbar open your skull with bass and wedge themselves in to stay. The slow, irresistible march of "Marmite" and "Riot Powder" could power dank club soundsystems by themselves, but it's self-conscious stabs at range, like the incongruously Auto-Tuned R&B "Lon-Don City," that sap Caspa's raw power. *Rob Geary*

CFCF

CONTINENT

Paper Bag/CAN/CD

The first sounds heard on the debut full-length from Montreal-based producer Michael Silver (musically known as CFCF) are a slow, bouncing beat matched by a handful of poignant synth tones that could have swirled straight from the hands of a lovesick android. *Continent's* opening track, "Raining Patterns," is more future-R&B than disco dance party, and it sets the mood for an album more about the upper half of your body than the lower. That's not to say CFCF offers no get-down tunes, as *Continent* is loaded with disco, boogie, Italo, and house influences that drive the heavy groove of "Half Dreaming" and the fractured Timbaland-meets-Junior Boys-meets-The Knife pop sound of "Come Closer." *Patric Fallon*

CLAUDE VONSTROKE

BIRD BRAIN

Dirtybird/US/CD

San Francisco-based Dirtybird and Mothership impresario Claude VonStroke (a.k.a. Barclay Crenshaw) is one of the few electronic music producers who can inject humor into his tracks without coming off like a doofus. On his follow-up to 2006's *Beware of the Bird*, VonStroke balances levity with darkness, as on "Monster Island," where a madcap 303 whoop contrasts with percussive, jangling chains and hazy strings. Sometimes things dip into silliness (guest vocalist Bootsy Collins' lyrical shenanigans on "The Greasy Beat," the Detroit Grand Pubahs-esque boob homage "Big n' Round"), but overall *Bird Brain* stakes out distinctive territory among tech-



ANNIE

Don't Stop

Smalltown Supersound/NOR/CD

Life isn't always easy for pop princesses. Sure, some become international megastars, but legions more simply fade away, or even worse, get stuck in label purgatory. Such was the fate of Annie, which is why it feels like a millenium or two has passed since songs like "Chewing Gum" and "Heartbeat" were being hailed as works of electro-pop genius. Now that her label drama has passed, Annie is back with her sophomore effort. Where her debut, *Anniemal*, harkened back to the Tom Tom Club's '80s funk-pop bounce, *Don't Stop* is at its best when channeling Hi-NRG—"Bad Times" and "Songs Remind Me of You" are practically 2009 versions of Stacey Q's "Two of Hearts." The album's second half seriously drags, but the sticky pop stylings of the title track, "Hey Annie," and "My Love Is Better" are deliciously fun—not to mention respectable—alternatives to the Lady Gagas and Kylies of the world. *Shawn Reynaldo*



house's most eccentric proclivities, Carl Craig-esque Detroitisms, lascivious Dr. Dre tributes, and Raymond Scott's *Soothing Sounds For Baby*. *Dave Segal*

COBRA KILLER

UPPERS AND DOWNERS

Monika/GER/CD

Still dolled up like fetishized East Berlin schoolmarms, Gina D'Orio and Annika Trost have kept up their art-damaged moxie, for better and worse. *Uppers and Downers* finds the pair unleashing more go-go swing, electroclash sleaze, and enough cryptic lyrics to puzzle feminist dissections for ages—on "Hello Celebrity" the girls catcall wonton-eating stars. Indie guitar icons Thurston Moore and J. Mascis show up on "Hang Up the Pinup" to flesh out a scuzzy metal jam while the ladies randomly hack up their vocals. The wackiness grows uninspired as the album proceeds, particularly on "Mr. Chang," when the ladies sing as airport luggage attendants. Just like the title, this album is all blissful highs and sudden lows, but offers very little to remember the morning after. *Cameron Macdonald*

DEL THE FUNKY HOMOSAPIEN AND TAME ONE

PARALLEL UNI-VERSES

Gold Dust/US/CD

In this *Parallel Uni-Verse*, that funk you like is back in style—if that funk is the laid-back, loop-heavy beat of '90s hip-hop overlaid with amiable wordplay harking back to Native Tongues and the Pharcyde. Del brings the malleable flow and distinctive voice of the West, while Tame One swings with the dry, aggressive flow of his roots in East Coast groups Artifacts and Weathermen, but over producer Parallel's digable planet of vintage

midtempo and jazzy beats, they bond over a shared history of growing up amid hip-hop's first truly national creative explosion, reminiscing over the greats and tearing up today's rappers in equal measure. *Rob Geary*

DEMDIKE STARE

SYMBIOSIS

Modern Love/UK/CD

Miles Whittaker has been a bewitchingly busy fella of late, releasing warehouse techno under his MLZ moniker, playing dubby doubles with Gary Howell in Pendle Coven and Andy Stott in the cheeky Millie & Andrea, and now teaming up with Sean Canty in the earthy, neo-pagan Demdike Stare. Spread too thin on the dark side, you say? Not by a long shot. "Suspicious Drone" gets the (witches') ball rolling rudely with an effects-treated gong and sustained subsonic bass tremors, "Haxan Dub" is a slo-mo 2-step march, and "Jannisary" samples world-beat strings and riddims to come up with something deliciously otherworldly. Sneaky, sinister, and sick in all the right ways. *Walter Wasacz*

DJ /RUPTURE & MATT SHADETEK

SOLAR LIFE RAFT

Agriculture/US/CD

From two of today's most uniquely fascinating producers, *Solar Life Raft* arrives as less a mix than a statement of purpose: a repositioning of experimental bass music into the context of contemporary avant-garde artwork, as worthy of a gallery as the club. DJ /rupture has a storied history of meshing poets and sound artists with skull-crushing bass, but when joined with Dutty Artz compatriot Shadetek, *SLR* relegates boundaries to irrelevance with surprising accessibility. Here experimental composers old (Luc Ferrari) and new (Nico Muhly) can meet dubstep's finest (Shackleton, Stagga) while avant-poet Caroline Bergvall sits happily beside Gang Gang Dance. The result is strikingly exciting—something equally triumphant for dancer, smoker, or Tate Modern chin-stroker. *Justin Hopper*

DOOM

UNINVITED GUESTS

Gold Dust/US/CD

There's only one thing better than a new DOOM album—a collection of supervillainous collabs. On *Uninvited Guests*, the artist list reads like a lyrical enthusiast's wet dream: De La Soul, Vast Aire, Count Bass D, Masta, Talib Kweli, various Wu members, and more. Album highlights include "Sniper Elite," on which Ghost



QUANTEC

Cauldron Subsidence

Echocord/GER/CD

Joined at the hip, sonically speaking, minimalist producers in Detroit and Berlin subverted standard techno and house of the mid-1990s by reducing music to architecture you can dance to. Basic Channel, Chain Reaction, and Plus 8 artists all got there first, but Germany's Sven Schienhammer (a.k.a. Quantec) was apparently doing some active listening back then. Echoes of this shift in sound design and texture are all over *Cauldron Subsidence*, his second full-length in two years. It includes unreleased tracks from 2001 that show Detroit-Berlin inspiration on "Absolute Level," "Satisfied," "Profound Experiences," and "Deep Rooted." Although it's hard to tell where the archival stuff ends and more recent work begins, a detour into current dubsteppa territory is most clear-cut on "Pandemonium," a sexy, shuffling bass jam that would feel right at home in a mix on Rinse FM. *Walter Wasacz*

and DOOM join up for black-ops fun over a Dilla beat, and the self-explanatory "Quite Buttery," where the Count and the Dr. trade high-cholesterol lines. Buggy cartoon excerpts and looped breaks keep it zany, and MF's slightly slurred delivery is as dope as ever. No currently active MC has more gotta-rewind-that moments. *Eric K. Arnold*

FUCK BUTTONS TAROT SPORT

ATP/UK/CD

Fuck Buttons' second album is an hour-long psychedelic workout that sounds like a singular complete thought—one hypnotic rhythm section and one batch of refried, melodic white noise from start to finish. While Andrew Weatherall's seamless editing and production help certainly played a role in the album's cohesive mix, Andrew Hung and Benjamin Power's deceptively limited sound arsenal truly emboldens the band's sprawling noise epics. The shuffling, masculine beat of "Rough Steez" foreshadows the motorik charge of "Phantom Limb," and the golden clatter of album opener "Surf Solar" lays groundwork for a sonically diverse and thoughtful record that remains constantly focused on its carefully crafted sound. *Patric Fallon*

FUCKPONY LET THE LOVE FLOW

Bitch Control/GER/CD

Building off the success of his recent *Fabric47* mix, Fuckpony (a.k.a. Jay Haze) drops *Let the Love Flow*, a house album built from the ground up by his own playing—there are no samples here. From the drums to the horns, Haze builds a record as much about sounds and performance as it is about memorable tracks. The music is at its best on "I Know It Happened" and "Fall Into Me," as guest vocalists Chela Simone and Laila Tov deliver memorable performances that give focus to Haze's often minimal arrangements. Although ambitious, *Let the Love Flow* feels more like Haze's sketchbook than a proper LP, but his sketches hint at a pop prowess that ultimately leaves listeners anxious for a more developed album. *Tyler McCauley*

HUDSON MOHAWKE BUTTER

Warp/US/CD

Glasgow wunderkind Hudson Mohawke may have titled his debut full-length *Butter*, but that doesn't mean that the music from this LuckyMe affiliate goes down smooth. That's not to say the music and production isn't on point—it's just that HudMo's ADD cutting and splicing gives his 21st-century digital R&B a hyperactive feel that borders on overwhelming. That said, *Butter's* playful spirit and choppy crunk bounce are a real breath of fresh air, a sensation only heightened by soulful guest turns from Olivier Daysoul and Dam-Funk. And when he calms down a bit, the results are absolutely sublime—"FUZE" is in the running for song of the year and "Star Crackout" sounds like DJ Shadow's *Endtroducing* updated for Generation Twitter. *Shawn Reynaldo*



ITALOBOYZ BLA BLA BLA

Mothership/US/CD

Techno is often an over-serious genre, so listening to the first ItaloBoyz full-length is a breath of fresh air—the duo crafts rich, funky tracks that are full of humor, esoteric influences, and the London transplants' penchant for intense rhythmic play. A prime example is found on "Chinese," a piece that utilizes extensive bits of Chinese-influenced piano, cut-up vocal portions culled from Chinese language instruction software, and jazzy house percussion that shimmers in just the right spots. "Techno Tower," on the other hand, recalls a more playful Gaiser, but it is "Bahia," a hypnotic techno slice based entirely on licensed John Coltrane loops and deep kicks, that really stays with the listener. *Thomas Rees*

ETIENNE JAUMET NIGHT MUSIC

Domino/US/CD

Mixed by Carl Craig, French producer Jaumet's first solo album delivers. 20-minute opener "For Falling Asleep" utilizes looped, occasionally acidic arpeggiations, with a processed saxophone providing the piece's main melody. Weird whispers and ululations create some foreboding undertones that wouldn't make for pleasant dreams, but the pastoral final minutes are dreamy enough for an afternoon nap. As the record continues, shades of early Nu Groove synth workouts and more esoteric Detroit techno come to the fore, with purposefully minimal and raw-seeming arrangements being the record's M.O. After hearing the Middle Eastern flavor of "Through the Strata" and the excellent atmospherics of album closer "At the Crack of Dawn," it's clear that *Night Music* is an unshakable, timeless piece of electronic music. *Thomas Rees*

JOGGER THIS GREAT PRESSURE

Magical Properties/US/CD

Technically, this is Jogger's first full-length, but there's enough music here to fill five albums. The duo (Amir Yaghmai on violin/guitar/vocals and Jonathan Larroquette on laptop/controllers/vocals) packs each of its 10 tracks here with sounds drawing on everything from ambient to folk to rock, utilizing a manic cut-and-paste-and-layer-and-distort-and-process aesthetic that's, well, crowded. To their credit, it's harder to pull off



FREEWAY & JAKE ONE "THE STIMULUS PACKAGE" - CD/2LP IN STORES 1.26.10

New full-length album from Roc-A-Fella, State Property affiliate Philadelphia Freeway. Produced entirely by super producer Jake One, *The Stimulus Package* follows up Freeway's recent internet onslaught of new material with his first official release since Free at Last.

www.myspace.com/freeway // www.myspace.com/jakeone



FELT "FELT 3: A TRIBUTE TO ROSIE PEREZ" - CD/2LP IN STORES 11.17.09

Slug (Atmosphere) and Murs (Living Legends) are back with Volume 3 of their popular Felt series. This time dedicating their signature light hearted back and forth to one badass Puerto Rican mami, Rosie Perez. With production being handled by Aesop Rock (Def Jux) Felt 3 takes on a darker, edgier feel than the previous releases.

www.myspace.com/mursandslug



BK-ONE w/BENZILLA "RÁDIO DO CANIBAL" - CD/2LP IN STORES NOW

Brother Ali DJ, BK-One and Benzilla craft a Brazilian inspired musical bed for some of Hip Hop's most engaging MC's. Features Scarface, Slug, Black Thought, Raekwon, Brother Ali, Phonte, Murs, Haiku D'Etat, P.O.S The Grouch, Blueprint, The Hypnotic Brass Ensemble and more.

www.myspace.com/pos



BROTHER ALI "US" - CD/2LP IN STORES NOW

The new album from Brother Ali, *Us* features appearances by Chuck D., Freeway, Joell Ortiz & Stokley Williams.

"...the most deeply thought-provoking work of Brother Ali's career..." -Pitchfork

www.brotherali.com



EYEDAEA & ABILITIES "BY THE THROAT" - CD/LP IN STORES NOW

The dynamic duo of EyeDea & Abilities returns after a five year hiatus to follow up their critically acclaimed sophomore album *E&A*. *By The Throat* cuts right to the vein, with biting guitars, fuzzy keyboards, melodic choruses, and some of their catchiest turntable work to date.

www.eyedeaaandabilities.com



TOKI WRIGHT "A DIFFERENT MIRROR" - CD IN STORES NOW

Debut release from Brother Ali opening act and hypeman, Toki is not only a well established MC but one of the Twin Cities hardest working community activists.

"One of the dopest MC's around, who makes noise both on the microphone and as an uncompromising community activist..." -Davey D

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REDSHAPE

The Dance Paradox

Delsin/NETH/CD

Out-of-control revelers at Berghain might disagree, but it seems like a lot of new techno has been greeted with a collective yawn in 2009. Enter Redshape, a mysterious masked man from Berlin whose debut full-length just might provide the techno world with the true north it so desperately needs. Sure, the album has its headier moments—see the slow burn of aptly named album opener "Seduce Me," the tape-hiss clicks and clacks of "Garage GT," or the synth-soaked trip-hop tumble of "Man Out of Time"—but *The Dance Paradox* never sounds aimless or without purpose. "Globe" and especially "Bound (Part 1&2)" turn up the intensity with sweaty Detroit undercurrents and sci-fi analog synths, while "Deep Space Mix (Edit)" tempers its shuffling backbone with foreboding alien squelches and a seriously sinister vibe. Many techno producers struggle with the album format, but *The Dance Paradox* is urgent, spooky, and absolutely essential. *Shawn Reynaldo*

crowded than spare, but songs like "Master and Student" would have benefited from the more thoughtful treatment found on the superior "Champing at the Bit (Live)." Plenty artists suffer from a lack of ideas—Jogger has too many. Now it's just a matter of pacing themselves. *Luciana Lopez*

KING CANNIBAL LET THE NIGHT ROAR

Ninja Tune/UK/CD

Dark is the word thrown around most often to describe King Cannibal, and it's probably the single best word to encapsulate the full aesthetic, sound, and ethos of the artist formerly known as Zilla. *Let the Night Roar* is a surprisingly cohesive album, representing pan-genrism at its best. "Aragami Style" kicks in the tight breakcore vein of a London Squat, the funky Jahcoozi collab "Murder Us" gets as dark and slinky as any track by The Bug, "Dirt" is a fantastic dancehall number that finds Daddy Freddy sounding better than he has in ages, and even the borderline ambience of "Onward Vultures" has its place. A fine debut, especially if you're feeling evil. *Matt Earp*

LYMBYC SYSTYM SHUTTER RELEASE

Mush/US/CD

Opening with a flurry of toms and sparse, echoing guitars, Lymbyc Systym's second album, *Shutter Release*, is another instrumental electronic pop effort from brothers Jared and Michael Bell. The album's increased sonic depth helps open up their Mice Parade-esque hypnotic electro-pop with an increased sonic palette and spacious mixes while showcasing the duo's musical growth with its ethereal songwriting and hushed melodies. In a genre where cute sounds can often replace real ideas, *Shutter Release* is filled with memorable songs that build from their arrangements into hummable, delicate slices of electronic twee. *Tyler McCauley*

MY ROBOT FRIEND SOFT-CORE

Double Feature/US/CD

On his third full-length album, *Soft-Core*, the imaginative Howard Robot has retrofitted his usual light-dappled indie-electronic milieu with a surprisingly simpatico cast of diverse musical characters. A cover of Luna's "23 Minutes in Brussels" finds Robot alone in his multi-textured electronic element, while "The Short Game," a clicking, infectious collaboration with Germany's Zombie Nation, draws comparisons to Hot Chip with its soft mood

and sweetly aching vocals. The bot waltzes through a dream world of '80s synth-pop with Yaz's Alison Moyet on "Waiting" and into the wistful, spacious "Astronaut" with dream-pop veteran Dean Wareham. Add in a few starry-eyed collaborations with Outputmessage, and it's a very pretty machine this robot has created. *Lulu McAllister*

PORT-ROYAL DYING IN TIME

n5MD/US/CD

Though the album's starkly snowy cover might have something to do with it, Genoa's port-royal does evoke a crystalline, wintry quality on its third full-length. High-frequency washes, plaintive delayed guitars, and tinkling synths abound amidst rhythm structures that evoke Squarepusher and Aphex Twin. The icy sheen makes the listening process feel a bit like a slalom ride down Mont Blanc, the apex coming with the M83-like glassiness of "I Used to Be Sad." Other tracks, like "Susy: Blue East Fading," recall Stars of the Lid, but with a nice shuffle behind the synth swells. If one can stand its brilliant cold without shivering, *dying in time* might be one of the most fulfilling records of the year. *Thomas Rees*

SCHLACHTHOFBRONX SCHLACHTHOFBRONX

Disko B/GER/CD

Munich isn't exactly known as a hotbed for global bass sounds, but if upstart trio Schlachthofbronx has its way, that reputation may be due for an update. "Schlachthof" is German for "slaughterhouse," which is oddly appropriate because these boys spend the bulk of their debut album slicing up beats from the far corners of the globe—Angolan *kuduro*, Brazilian *baile* funk, Caribbean *soca*, Jamaican dancehall, and Cape Verdean *funana* are all represented, as are dubstep, Balkan brass, and even the traditional sounds of their native Bavaria. High-gloss but always loyal to the low end, Schlachthofbronx's music distills these disparate sounds into a speedy and infectiously hyperactive brew of next-level party music. A thrilling debut. *Shawn Reynaldo*

SOLOMUN DANCE BABY

Dynamix/GER/CD

After three years of releasing 12-inches for the likes of Four:Twenty, liebe*detail, and his own Dynamix imprint, Bosnia-born, Hamburg-based Mladen Solomun unleashes his debut long-player. Overlook the mildly tacky album title and *Dance Baby* is a quality debut that deploys

deep-house signifiers with relative subtlety and nuance. Individual tracks seem best when they sound purpose-built to ease into a Ben Watt DJ set (the bubbly opener "Country Song," the string-embellished "Hypnotize"), but, given a few plays, the album also works as a flowing, coherent whole. It's not immediately clear why Solomun chose to package the release with a picture of a millipede—perhaps he's suggesting that the music is going to get lots of legs moving. *David Hemingway*

THE CLONIOUS BETWEEN THE DOTS

Ubiquity/US/CD

In addition to doling out wings on a daily basis, Red Bull is gaining quite the reputation with its esteemed Music Academy becoming an official launch pad for young, innovative, left-of-center artists from around the globe. Austrian producer Paul Movahedi (a.k.a. The Clonious) is no exception. The soul-jazz combo feel of "Agenda" juxtaposed with the angular glitch beats of "Dataflow" exemplifies Movahedi's full range of musical motion. Moments like the remix of "One at a Time" (featuring RBMA co-conspirator Muhsinah), the warped and beautifully schizophrenic "Oily Glue," and vocal drops from Dudley Perkins and Georgia Anne Muldrow are all firm signifiers of Movahedi's promise in the realm of the beat scene. Vienna is definitely calling. *Rico Washington*

TRAXX FAITH

Nation/US/CD

The first full-length from Traxx (a.k.a. Chicago-based DJ and producer Melvin Oliphant III) touts the most jacking-est of styles—"jakbeat," an Ann Arbor and Chicago sound that's both an ode to and update of early Chicago house. Traxx, no purist, reaches back even further ("Parametric Melody" nods to Larry Levan, quoting Peech Boys "Don't Make Me Wait") while also looking ahead. Vintage as the drum programming and acid synths are on a track like "Enka," *Faith* has a soulful, futuristic quality throughout. Album standout "XTC for Love" features guest vocalist James T. Cotton (a.k.a. Tadd Mullinix, a.k.a. Dabrye) contributing yearning, indignant vocals over glowing keyboard chords and a hard-driving beat. A slow-burning, addictive debut. *Michael Harkin*

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ARTISTS TO WATCH



CFCF

Montreal, Canada



Somewhere between the Balearic, slo-mo stylings of Meanderthals and the synthetic gloss of Jan Hammer sits CFCF (a.k.a. Michael Silver). The celebrated DJ and remixer's first full-length, *Continent*, explores many different electronic terrains with skill and aplomb, with everything from a disco version of Fleetwood Mac's "Big Love" to a track that samples Double Fantasy's "Children of the Universe" to a song that would fit right in with Hammer's work on *Miami Vice*. With the new record as well as a host of remixes for Sally Shapiro, The Presets, and Crystal Castles behind him, CFCF seems prepared to become one of the new stars of the cosmic disco-pop bacchanal that luckily shows no signs of ceasing.

myspace.com/cfcf

GUEST REVIEWS: TYONDAI BRAXTON



As the son of out-jazz composer Anthony Braxton, a member of acclaimed post-rock super-group Battles, and a renowned solo artist, Tyondai Braxton is certainly one of the biggest names in the avant-pop music world. His second solo album, *Central Market* (Warp), is somewhat of a departure, for after years of strictly solo efforts, the new record sees him collaborating with NYC's Wordless Music Orchestra. For Braxton, it was an amazing experience "to try out some difficult pieces quickly," and discover that his loop-based work paired nicely with a Stravinsky influence. Here, the NYC-based composer talks about some of the music he enjoyed the most in 2009. myspace.com/tyondaibraxton

DIRTY PROJECTORS
BITTE ORCA

Domino/US/CD

I've seen Dirty Projectors through many different incarnations over the decade, all of them awe-inspiring. *Bitte Orca* pools all of what Dave Longstreth has been exploring over the years into a powerful, succinct statement. With the unbelievable talent that makes up the band, it's no wonder this record came out the way it did. Truly masterful.

ITSNOTYOUITSME
WALLED GARDENS

New Amsterdam/US/CD

Caleb Burhans and Greg McMurray come out of the gate with a pastoral, all-encompassing sound. Mostly ambient, the sounds continuously subvert a dominant texture with strings, guitar, voice, and electronics falling over each other. Beautiful.

AMARCORD NINO ROTA

Hannibal/US/CD

Great movie, great soundtrack. Nino Rota is one of my favorite composers. I cooked a huge Italian dinner to this the other night. I had an apron on and was tasting spaghetti sauce from a large wooden spoon and this huge pot fell to the floor. I started laughing so fucking hard. My girlfriend walked in on me and I had tears in my eyes from laughing so hard. The music made it so much more funny.

SUNN O)))
MONOLITHS AND DIMENSIONS

Southern Lord/US/CD

This is my favorite of the records I've heard from Sunn O))). Epic and patient. When the women's choir on "Big Church" comes in, you understand the scope of what they're working with here. One of my faves this year.



MARTIN KEMP

London, UK

Although lots of folks might simply know him as Brackles' little brother, 22-year-old Martin Kemp has done a fine job skating the wobbly line between garage and dubstep in his own right. Citing artists like El-B, Horsepower, and Zed Bias as major influences—not to mention hip-hop demigods J. Dilla and Madlib—Kemp has been digging into leftfield beats since his teen years. He's already released "No Charisma" on Brackles' and Shortstuff's Blunted Robots label, and more new tunes are on the way, including another Blunted Robots release and a Royal T remix on grime imprint No Hats No Hoods.

myspace.com/themartinkemp

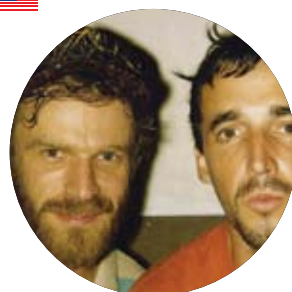


TANLINES

Brooklyn, NY

It is telling that Tanlines can still put on an amazingly fun dance show in the stifling, sticky summer heat of Brooklyn; otherwise, the duo's synthetic tropical beats would seem to be the product of poseurs. With a perpetual crowd of sweat-drenched, gyrating bodies at their feet, it's clear that Jesse Cohen and Eric Emm can bring the heat as well as they can handle it. With an upcoming full-length on True Panther and remixes for Glasser, Telepathe, and Au Revoir Simone already under their belts, the boys of Tanlines will soon be bringing their tropical flavor to many more ears.

myspace.com/tanlinestheband



JAVELIN

Brooklyn, NY

Perhaps the fact that Tom van Buskirk and George Langford of Javelin are cousins explains the weirdly organic sounds that they gather from disparate elements, or maybe it is their 20-plus boombox live set-up, but either way, the duo inhabits a lovely sonic space between the beaches of the Balearic Isles, the streets of Brooklyn, and the dusty paths outside of Lagos. Like a less death-obsessed, sunshine-y version of Alan Bishop's Sublime Frequencies projects, van Buskirk and Langford know how to make esoterica fun and danceable. Upcoming releases include a second limited-edition 12" on Thrill Jockey and a debut full-length on Luaka Bop sometime next year.

myspace.com/hotjamzofjavelin



DORIAN CONCEPT

Vienna, Austria

Oliver Thomas Johnson has been messing around with music since he took piano lessons as a kid, but only after becoming a self-described "pot-smoking teenager" and being introduced to electronic music did he become inspired to start making beats. The bedroom keyboard wizard dropped his debut album, *When Planets Explode*, earlier this year on Kindred Spirits, but it's the non-album single "Trilingual Dance Sexperience," with its warped Hoover synths, hyperactive stop-and-start rhythm, and hijacked B-more beat, that has truly shot Dorian Concept into the stratosphere.

myspace.com/dorianconcept

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IN THE STUDIO: HEALTH

THE LA NOISE ROCKERS PONDER PREDATORY BEATS AND SUBVERT THEIR ENGINEER'S ADVICE.

On its latest disc, Los Angeles-based, EFX pedal-saturated quartet HEALTH presents a sprawling feedback loop both manically chaotic and meticulously paced. Featuring drummer Benjamin Jared Miller, singer/guitarist Jake Duzsik, bassist John Famiglietti, and guitarist Jupiter Keyes, HEALTH has followed 2007's self-titled full-length debut with *Get Color*, an album borne from a sweltering, windowless practice space, an opening slot on the Nine Inch Nails tour, Tecate, borrowed Mesa Boogie amps, and gently nuzzling a good ribbon mic. While taping contact mics to floating looms and broken elevators, HEALTH painstakingly adjusted knobs and randomly generated harmonics to compose their most accessible, uncompromised tracks. Here, Keyes and Famiglietti hint at how the band ultimately arrived at its scorched grooves and cross-bled melodies.

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR RECORDING ENVIRONMENT.

Jupiter Keyes: We found a studio in Lincoln Heights with 30-foot-high walls that was 30 feet wide and 50 feet deep. It was drywall, though, while we were hoping for concrete or adobe or brick because it diffuses the reverberation a bit better than a flat surface. But it was still a very, very different experience than the first album, which we recorded in [downtown Los Angeles D.I.Y. performance space] The Smell.

WHAT IS IT THAT THE ENGINEER PROVIDED?

JF: The first album, we didn't know what we were doing; it was made mostly on laptops with whatever gear we had.
JK: On our first album, John went to so many message boards and then we applied whatever knowledge he could find. That might lead to six hours moving a mic to get it to sound right. So working with an engineer, we learned so much about things like phase cancellation when layering, properly positioned monitoring to really understand how your bass resonates—things that are important when recording.

ONCE YOU HAD THAT KNOWLEDGE, DID YOU PREFER TO USE OR ABUSE IT?

JF: From our point of view, I would say use, but from the "proper" point of view, it's definitely abusing.
JK: There were near-yelling matches; the engineer is a purist and we wanted to not be so by-the-book, even if it's problematic... For example, mixing to a two-track, we wanted to use the boards to make a more rich pan across the stereo spectrum, but he'd say the pots are too scratchy or whatever rather than saying he didn't want to do it because it's not "right." But sonically it was what we wanted, so that had to be stuff we'd attempt to do later on our computers.

ARE THE SOUNDS PREDATORS OR PREY? ARE THEY BEING CHASED OR CHASING THINGS?

JF: I would say the sounds are prey. We try to control and repeat everything we do. When we create, whatever noise we add, we rein it in to a response we can use.
JK: But every once in a while, there's a jaguar on the tree branch, a surprise that hits us.
JF: One jaguar that almost killed us was there's this shitload of fucking crackle caused by faulty studio equipment. But at the same time, there was a lot utilized from these jams that was used for noises later. That's where a random flash gets in, something you can't repeat that's for the record only.

DID THIS ALBUM EVER FEEL LIKE GOING AGAINST INSTINCT IN A WAY THAT WAS REFRESHING?

JF: With technical stuff we were all for it, but when it came to other things that seemed overly conservative, that was a big bummer. For certain things we had to remix more on our own later because we wanted to use sub-bass, but it was contrary to the engineer's sensibilities.

WHY SUB-BASS?

JF: It's just something that separates modern music from older records. Sub-bass is a way to translate that feeling of experiencing someone live... through your ears and also through your body.

WHEN DID THE PROCESS FEEL COMPLETE?

JK: I would say when we scrapped a lot and did it ourselves.
JF: We didn't want to mix on Jupiter's laptop—it sounded much better on the studio gear—but some things got so messed up. So then our mastering guy filled in the blanks.
JK: He took the tracks and added grit and warmth to make the laptop sound like the studio. We used Logic for the [remix], to add the sub-bass, and I had some Yamaha HS50s and a subwoofer for monitoring, so that helped fill in a lot of shit.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU ENJOY ABOUT ALL THE CHAOS?

JF: We love the feeling of chaos, but not actual chaos... that isn't gratifying.
JK: Our music is about creating the illusion of chaos, like everything is about to fly off the edge... but it's all premeditated.

Get Color is out now on Lovepump United. myspace.com/healthmusic



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ARTIST TIPS: INTRUSION

Chicago-area producer Stephen Hitchell (a.k.a. Intrusion) crafts dub-techno that sounds like it's underwater, or floating through the air from a basement club 10 blocks away. Under his many monikers, including the collaborative Echospace project with Rod Modell, Hitchell has helped bring about a renaissance of the genre, which many had assumed would falter after the dissolution of Basic Channel. But with a studio full of analog gear and a penchant for warm, crackling tones, Hitchell has brought an airiness to a sound that originated in hard, deeply contrasting sonic textures, particularly on this year's *Seduction of Silence* (Echospace). Here, Hitchell talks about the five parameters and techniques most central to his sound, as well as the general philosophy behind his productions.

Thomas Rees

echospacedetroit.com



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SOUND DESIGN

Sound design is by far one of the most personal aspects of my music and what I generally spend the most time doing. Get involved with your synths—every aspect of their functions and unique personalities. Like a person, each one has its own unique sonic signature, its own "sound"—one which could be built upon by learning the instrument inside and out. If you get a new synth (hardware or VST), delete the factory presets and start from ground zero (most synths have a factory restore!). Build a library of sounds that are your own, as it will help to build a unique sonic signature for yourself.

SAMPLING

Sampling is an art in itself and an integral part of how this music came to be. Many samplers out there can help add warmth, and give a flat and dull digital sound a new lease on life. I've found with samplers, the older the better. Some of my favorites are the Emulator 1 and SCI Prophet 2002, both of which use 8- and 12-bit sampling at lower frequencies. The unique tonal character they give to whatever you're sampling is out of this world. Sometimes in moving forward it's best to go in reverse.

SIGNAL PATHS

It's best to research how a sound should be processed rather than playing the guessing game, which helps to highlight and emphasize the best acoustic and tonal characteristics. It's like running an EQ into a compressor—when you change the EQ settings, your compression rate also changes, and usually turns into a muddy mess. Learn about your processors (whether hardware or VST), how they can be best applied, and how to highlight their own unique features. I've had numerous clients run their entire mixes through compression and hard limiting to the point of hammering the mix into a square box, and this is *not* a good thing!

RECORDING TO TAPE

Everything I record I bounce down to tape. Granted, 1/4" and 1/2" tape is getting harder and harder to come by (at least stuff that isn't shedding), but if you can find a good machine and tape, it will warm your mixes in indescribable ways. Part of its magic is in the machine itself: old tape machines, if calibrated correctly, can push the compression scheme three-fold without distorting the source signal, which adds to the saturation and

yields a much higher quality master than in a DAW. Tape compression and true tape saturation make for some of the best masters you'll ever hear.

MASTERING

Some of the best mastering engineers I know were not musicians. It's very important to separate yourself from the music you make when mastering it. I try to explain to my clients that I don't listen to their music. Rather, I pay attention to the technical data and what the equipment is telling me. You can make a good song sound bad if you're not paying attention, so it's important to go over every small detail in the finalization process. I don't ever try to get material to its "peak" level but to its most "natural" level. And always check your master in different environments: your car, headphones, home stereo, crappy boom box, studio, and club, if that is your target audience.



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ASSASSIN'S CREED II

UBISOFT; XBOX 360, PS3



Assassin's Creed II, the second title about a secret society of deadly hitmen, takes place almost 300 years after the first, moving from the Middle Eastern locale of the original to Renaissance-era Italy, where wall-crawling anti-hero Ezio seeks to avenge the death of his nobleman father by slitting the throats of those that conspired against him. Like the original, the game will introduce you to semi-accurate portrayals of historical figures of the time, like Machiavelli and de Medici, but unlike the original, our main fratelli won't necessarily be working alone, as one of said historical figures, Leonardo da Vinci, will provide you with all manner of death-dealing contraptions, including his famed flying machine. By using stealth and subterfuge in concert with public commotions and brute force, Ezio must evade capture on his way to unearthing a plot that reaches much further than his own time—in both directions. An interactive history lesson and stunning thriller all at once, *Assassin's Creed II* ups the bar considerably for this generation of adventure titles. *Ryan Rayhill*

BROTHERS GONNA WORK IT OUT

The first multiplayer Mario adventure in 26 years (no, *Mario Kart* does not count), *New Super Mario Bros. Wii* (Nintendo; Wii) returns the series to its 2D roots, allowing for four players to help or hinder each other as they venture through the Mushroom Kingdom battling Lemmy, Wendy O., and Iggy, Bowser's nasty, rock-inspired offspring. This one hits like a nostalgic turtle shell to the face, and we couldn't be more pleased. *RR*



HEAR HEAR



To pump out dope music, having the best studio gear, software, and a keen ear for songwriting are only part of the equation. The mix-down can make or break a tune. Although a good producer will monitor his or her tracks in a variety of ways (headphones, car speakers), accurate studio monitors enable the ear to focus on a song's myriad sound waves. **KRK R6 Passive Studio Monitors** (\$299) render a crisp, sparkingly rich tonal range. These speakers require a power amp to run, but the R6s' frequency performance is exceptional: bass, mids, and highs are comfortably represented. R6s' curved front baffles minimize distortion. Sub-bass frequencies don't rasp and quiet ambient tones, as well as the delicate electro-percussive elements that frequent dance music, sound perfect. As the R6 manual suggests, correct room positioning will enhance or detract from your experience, so pay attention to where you place 'em! Compared to other studio monitors that over-emphasize bass or highs, the R6s nail the sweet spot. *Tomas Palermo*

STANTON SCS.3M MIDI CONTROL SURFACE

MSRP: \$199; ENTERTHESYSTEM.COM



Once known for wide stereo-output, low cue-burn needles, Stanton Magnetics has successfully reinvented itself with the SC System MIDI controller line—flyweight, easy portable boxes offering the StanTouch touch-sensitive control surface with absolute/relative controls within Native Instruments Traktor Pro, Ableton Live, Serato SCRATCH Live, etc. (Traktor Pro being this review's vehicle).

First was the SCS.3d, a switchable dual-deck controller that could be chained to easily tweak two or four tracks. Now joining the family is the SCS.3m, a more "traditional" two-channel mixer (scalable via A-B, C-D buttons) with left and right strips each offering four triggers and three sliders, volume control, plus LED level indicators. However, at first the 3m seems somewhat redundant; control of three-band EQ and effects modules is already within the 3d. But what's useful is not what the 3m gives, it's what it gives back.

The 3m acts as a USB hub, allowing all units to draw power through it off a solitary computer port (freeing

slots for external file libraries, etc.). The 3m takes back trackpad duties, giving more direct access to, say, master volume output (supplementing 3d gain sliders). It offers visible EQ-level feedback and up to six sliders to manipulate simultaneously, freeing the 3d for cue/loop assigns and MPC-like tricks. Finally, the 3m gives some fun back, allowing for transformer-like effects with one stationary finger plus an itchy thumb on the crossfade/volume/ratio strip.

Most pleasant is Stanton's actively developed templates through its DaRouter software. Interaction is generally plug-and-play once you've loaded the latest Bome map/tsi presets (found on Stanton's forum). Different fingers may mean a small +/- margin of error, but response is still the high-instantaneous speed working DJs need. Additionally, the System is so righteously gig bag friendly. In the end, the SCS.3m is highly recommended as a compact, fully realized Traktor mixer; you didn't realize you missed it till you had it back. *Tony Ware*

DEAD ZONE

Why won't the world's fascination with zombies seem to, erm, die? Well, if *Left 4 Dead 2* (EA; Xbox 360, PS3) is any indication, we'd say it's because dispatching of their shambling husks in a crimson mist of gnarly viscera is just too damn fun! Coming only a year after the original (from a developer known for taking its sweet-ass time with sequels), *L4D2* has some scratching their heads and claiming "cash-in." But while the same four-player co-op mayhem is intact, improved AI, more challenging enemies (infected in riot gear anyone?), and a fully fleshed-out story for each character as they travel from Savannah to New Orleans makes this quickly made sequel much more intense than the original ever was. *Le Mort est Mort. Vive le Mort! RR*



AX MEN COMETH

Roland AX-Synth

MSRP: \$79; roland.com

The keytar is dead. *Long live the keytar.* Roland's latest '80s throwback includes a built-in sound engine, meaning you don't need to be tethered to your computer to make noise while tinkling its 49 ivories (but you can be if you want to, thanks to USB connectivity). It also has such on-board niceties as a ribbon controller (for pitch bends), a modulation bar, a few knobs to shape your sound, and an LED display to help see what the hell you're doing. The invisible D-Beam sends various controller changes to the device (sorta like a Theremin), and it'll run for about six hours on batteries. A bit goofy, yes, but the AX seems somehow relevant in this age of *Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero*. *Evan Shamoon*



MODERN WARFARE 2

ACTIVISION; XBOX 360, PS3



Picking up where 2007's Game of the Year left off, *Modern Warfare 2* puts you in the boots of a young sergeant following the bloody trail of a Russian "ultranationalist" who takes the reins of a terrorist organization once run by your nemesis from the original—before you capped him, that is. This new threat to world peace takes you everywhere from the crowded streets of Rio to the blizzard-shrouded mountains of Siberia, where you use everything from choppers and snowmobiles to dual pistols and high-powered assault rifles to flush out any international riff-raff before sending them home in a pine box. Even more visually immersive and violently spectacular than its predecessor, *MW2* also offers co-op play and super-deep online multiplayer options complete with new modes, match customization, and the ability to call in devastating AC-130 airstrikes. Undoubtedly, *MW2* is the most impressive action title of the season, if not the year. *RR*

SHURE THINGS



Shure SRH840 Professional Monitoring Headphones

MSRP: \$199; shure.com

The Shure brand is no alien to the studio, stage, or even the subway platform. Now, they're positioned to invade the mixing console. And with the closed-back, circumaural **SRH840** Professional Monitoring Headphones, the company has an immediate critical listening contender offering platinum engineer performance at a project-studio-friendly \$199 price. The SRH840 signature is relatively neutral without being in any way dull. Covering 5 Hz to 25 kHz, the 40mm drivers' treble is not overly brightened, bass is deep and quick, and mids are mildly pushed in a musical sense, gently rounding hot edges. With 102dB/mW sensitivity (44 ohms impedance) the SRH840s don't need amping to avoid congestion (though it never hurts to render full transient extension). Driven out of the board, laptop, etc., these collapsible (though not wholly "portable") cans show no grain, no pain. Aesthetically, the SRH840s are definitely not geared toward audiophile vanity, but the extended comfort and clarity could have in-the-know home listeners just as enthralled as producers. *TW*

PIECE OF CAKE



Cakewalk SONAR V-Studio 100 Portable Production Studio

MSRP: \$699; sonarvstudio.com

Umami, or "savory," is the recently recognized fifth taste. Umami's unctuous synergy also describes this Roland-built **SONAR V-Studio 100**—a compact composition tool, performance aide, and production interface that makes few compromises. The digital unit's core is a platform-agnostic 24 bit/96 kHz, 10-in/6-out mixer, including Hi-Z guitar jack and +48V condenser preamps, plus on-board effects. When not connected to computer by USB, this unit offers sturdy hardware monitoring/PA mixdown, plus stereo recording/playback to/from SD/SDHC cards. And when tethered, the box can bypass standalone EQ to capture clean headroom and map transport controls through Sonar VS software (PC only) or to any DAW through the Mackie Control protocol (even through self-assigned MIDI if industrious). Equally compact, cross-platform vocal/channel strip/VST plug-ins are included. This highly versatile, small footprint I/O offers intuitive ways for working songwriters to dial in a meaty balance between stage and project studio. *TW*

RIDE IT ON



The king of the cube gleam himself returns with the most realistic skating title yet, *Tony Hawk: Ride* (Activision; Xbox 360, PS3, Wii). While *Ride* features all sorts of new features, the most visible change is in the control—you won't be stringing together ollies and grinds with the thumb-smash of a few buttons. No, this time around, the control lays at your feet in the form a skateboard controller that reacts to things like foot placement and weight shifts. This is as real as it gets without breaking your arm... which you will still probably do. *RR*

REDEFINE. REINVENT. REBEL.

"It will blow your mind."

King Britt (DJ/Producer | FiveSix Media)



There are a lot of DJs who are content with following the crowd—playing the same old tracks, and using the same old gear. But you aren't like that. You're different...

Torq® DJ systems are designed for DJs prepared to advance their artform. Don't just mix music—redefine it. Reinvent it. Renew it. Create your own sound using Torq's built-in effects. Sample and scratch—on the fly. Mash-up and remix tracks anyway you want. Go beyond the status quo. Be original. Take the scene by storm. Develop your own unique sound and style. Rebel with Torq.

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- Instantly recall and trigger entire snapshots of effects and preferences with a single keystroke
- Create your own sound using third-party VST effects
- MIDI Clock and ReWire compatibility lets you interface with external gear and recording software



Visit www.torq-dj.com now to learn how Torq DJ systems will ignite your creative revolution.

SABOTEUR

EA; XBOX 360, PS3

While the term "innovative WWII game" may sound about as likely these days as Hitler sending a Bat Mitzvah gift, **Saboteur** bucks conventional wisdom and turns games about the Big One on their ear in at least a few respects. For starters, you aren't a private in any army or a clandestine spy, but instead an Irish race-car driver (based on a real person) who hangs out in France only to drive cars, get drunk, and chase dames. Once the Nazis' grip over Paris tightens and your friend and personal hero are murdered, you decide to become a solo Inglorious Basterd on a campaign to eliminate as many bad guys as possible through sabotage and straight-up assassination. Cleverly, the game uses color to illustrate the will of the French people throughout town with everything starting off in black and white à la *Casablanca* only to spring to vibrant color once you manage to exact vengeance in a certain part of town, increasing La Resistance's willingness to help you out. Stirring, humorous, and a hell of a ride, *Saboteur* makes fascist oppression fun again! *RR*

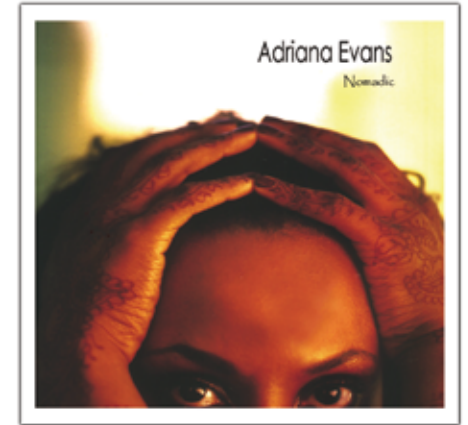


How deep is your soul?



georgia anne muldrow - early
cd + digital
available november 10th, 2009

"She's Incredible." - *MOS DEF*
"My favorite artist out right now." - *PHAROAE MONCH*



adriana evans - nomadic
cd + digital
available november 10th, 2009

"Head and shoulders above her debut!" - *Dusty Groove*
"As good a soul record as you'll hear this year..." - *URB*



www.animatedcartunes.com
www.myspace.com/animatedcartunes

XLR8R'S 10 BEST GAMES OF 2009



New Super Mario Bros Wii (Wii)
Returning to dance with who brung him, the latest *Mario* game proves to be one of the most entertaining.

Street Fighter 4 (Xbox 360, PS3)
The best fighting series of the '90s also managed to barely eke out the best fighting game of the '00s with this gem from earlier in the year.

Batman: Arkham Asylum (Xbox 360, PS3)
Few expected a game based on a licensed character to be this good, but awesome design and strong fan-service helped the Bat fly all the way to the top.

Uncharted 2: Among Thieves (PS3)
No doubt the best action-adventure exclusive for the PS3, this thief stole our heart.



Tekken 6 (Namco; PS3, Xbox 360, PSP)
This 15-year-old series remains the benchmark in both ridiculously deep 3D combat and just plain ridiculousness—Patricide! Robots! Karate! All in the name of hostile corporate takeovers and global domination!

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 (Xbox 360, PS3)
A more intense shooter you will not find this year.

DJ Hero (Xbox 360, PS3, Wii)
This revived our interest in the music-game genre with spot-on mixing and beat-matching via the realistic turntable controller.



Shadow Complex (Xbox 360)
Dripping with love for those that came before it, this downloadable game proved that 2D still has a place.

GTA: Chinatown Wars (DS)
The first mature title for the DS is also the best, with a huge, exciting world masterfully poured into a tiny package.

Resident Evil 5 (Xbox 360, PS3)
The most controversial of the series so far is also the best.

Flower (PS3)
Controlling the wind as it blows flower petals through hills and valleys may sound boring but it was hypnotic instead.

CONSUMPTION EQUALS REDEMPTION

FELIX YOU ARE THE ONE I PICK krank139

"...these are some of the most beautiful songs you'll hear. Ever. This is essential listening." *xerox (australia)*

ATLAS SOUND LOGOS krank138

"It flows from beginning to end, alluring with a calmly mutating surface and a palpable pulse of life and thought and memory." *treblezine*

WHITE RAINBOW NEW CLOUDS krank137

"Forkner makes albums for people who listen to albums. Taken as a whole *New Clouds* is fantastic." *brainwashed*

ETHERNET 144 PULSATIONS OF LIGHT krank136

"Despite its ghost-like veneer, *144 Pulsations Of Light* is a warm and welcoming journey into sweet nothingness." *drum media perth*

TO KILL A PETTY BOURGEOISIE MARLONE krank135

"These two rebels create textures that haunt and melodies that would make any capitalist pig run for his/her life." *XLR8R*

NUDGE AS GOOD AS GONE krank134

"Dig deep, and the blood coursing through these tracks is clear. That's why *As Good as Gone* is the kind of record that indicates a band has found its signature sound, and is poised to deepen and expand it." *pitchfork*

DEERHUNTER RAINWATER CASSETTE EXCHANGE krank133

"At five songs and 15 minutes long, *Rainwater Cassette Exchange* is a quick tour of what *Deerhunter* can do and how well they do it, and more proof the band's inspiration is at its peak." *all music guide*

GREG DAVIS MUTUALLY ARISING krank132

"Davis strips sound to its time-suspending essence and stretches gently modulating tonalities across limitless expanses." *textura*

GREGG KOWALSKY TAPE CHANTS krank131

"a infinite realm of fluid colors and textures at once beautiful and unsettling..." *cokemachineglow*

VIS-ED Michael Cina

THE GHOSTLY DESIGNER AND TYPE WRANGLER TALKS ABOUT
THE COSMOS, GETTING LOOSE, AND LED ZEPPELIN'S PRESENCE.

Left:
Michael Cina exclusive
for XLR8R, 2009

With clients as seemingly disparate as Hewlett-Packard, Pepsi, and Ghostly International, Minneapolis-based Michael Cina is a workhorse designer whose oeuvre is exemplary of an artist thinking in multiple media without elevating one over another.

An inheritor of the idea of the *gesamtkunstwerk* (total artwork), Cina's precise graphic design and typography for his YouWorkForThem design showcase is informed by his more abstract paintings, and vice-versa. "I don't feel my career is based on a specific style like a lot of artists and designers," Cina acknowledges, but this penchant for a more holistic view of what design and art can accomplish explains his many successes: collaborative design work has yielded contracts from Coca-Cola, Pepsi, and numerous other corporate giants, while his paintings have graced the covers of magazines and records for Kate Simko, Bodycode, and many more techno heavyweights. A former DJ and electronic music fan himself, Cina is meticulous about his record-cover design process, listening to the album repeatedly and "thinking about what it would look like, or how to represent it." With a palette that's equally informed by Twombly and Rothko, Cina's covers complement the abstracted but obviously sensual music within, bringing some much-needed color to the often black-and-white world of techno sleeves. Here, he talks about his processes, organizational skills (or lack thereof), and most important influences.

youworkforthem.com,
michaelcinaassociates.com

I LET GO OF THINGS THAT
I HELD ONTO FOR YEARS,
TO FIND SOMETHING
BETTER IN
LIFE.



Above:
Lawrence's "Divided" '12"

Right:
Broker/Dealer's *Soft Sell* EP



Did you study design? If so, what did you get from your education that wouldn't necessarily translate to job skills?

Yes, I studied Graphic Communication and did horribly. I was DJing in Dallas at the time, but DJing more than doing school work. I slowly dropped out of college after five years and DJed for a year until reality woke me up. The most important things I learned were to work hard, be meticulous, and never be late. In school they would have you do 400 or more ideas for just a logo, the final had to be drawn exact (Rapidograph pens and Mylar), and there were no late projects.

Do you find yourself coming back to certain themes throughout your work?

I have always been attracted to maps, diagrams, the cosmos, patterns, typography.

What do you do when you are faced with a creative block?

Work harder (this is both good and bad). I should probably just read, but I seem to work until I get

something going. Another good route is to just start over or just stop working on the project. There is nothing better than deleting a file that has troubled you.

Have you had a mentor-figure in your career who has influenced your work, work ethic, or process?

Emil Ruder was my main source into proper design. Before I dropped out of school, I picked up a paperback of *Typographie* for seven bucks and read it over and over and stared at the images. That book showed me ways to think and approach visual ideas that I was never taught. All my life I have wanted a real mentor, someone like Wolfgang Weingart or Wim Crowel.

What typeface would you like to never see used again?

Papyrus.

What's your process like? What's the first thing you usually do?

Normally I will get a brief and just sit on it for a day, let it float around in my head. Sometimes I have an idea right away, and normally those don't work out. Sometimes I sketch, sometimes I write down words. The main prerequisite for success is knowing what the client wants or knowing where it should go. That direction always leads me to good results.

What do you find to be the biggest obstacle when designing type?

There are many. The first is ratio. I will draw five or so letters and realize that a curve is wrong or the metrics are bad. I redraw everything again, maybe five more times, until I get it right. If you don't start over, your typeface will not turn out how it should and you resent it. This is something that took years to learn—you always fix mistakes. After that, it is either the lowercase or uppercase. If I start on lowercase letters, I don't know how the upper will look, really, and that stumps me. There are different proportions and looks, too, so you have to get past



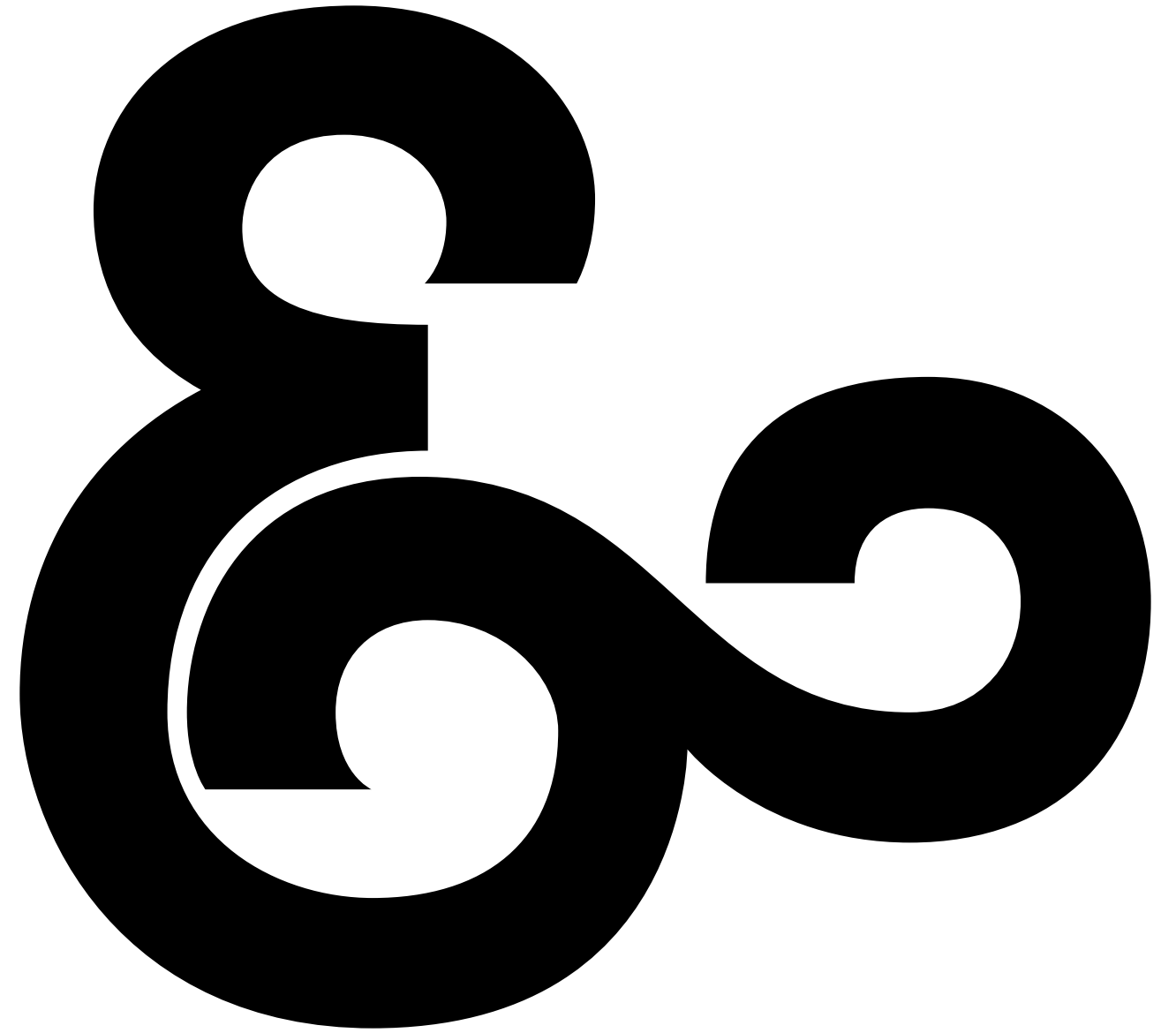
Above: Untitled painting



that. Then, how many weights are you going to do, or any at all? Alternates or not? I always want alternates. Then you have to finish the full font. All 250 or more characters for a basic Latin set. That is the largest obstacle, as it is just a chore. Then exporting can be a royal pain as well. So the full process is an obstacle. Sometimes I really wonder why I do it until I see people use it well; that is probably the biggest payoff.

The two ends of the Michael Cina spectrum seem to be your abstract and gestural paintings, and the more rigid typography on the other. Do you feel one end is a reaction against the other?

Totally. I struggle a lot without being “loose” enough in my design. It is easy for me to work with structure and grids. When you do art, you have to be loose, and the media fights against you. It’s a wonderful process because, unlike design, your work has to be perfect how it is. You can’t just tweak the colors in Photoshop or move something over a little. A painting is final. I learn a lot about typography/design through painting.

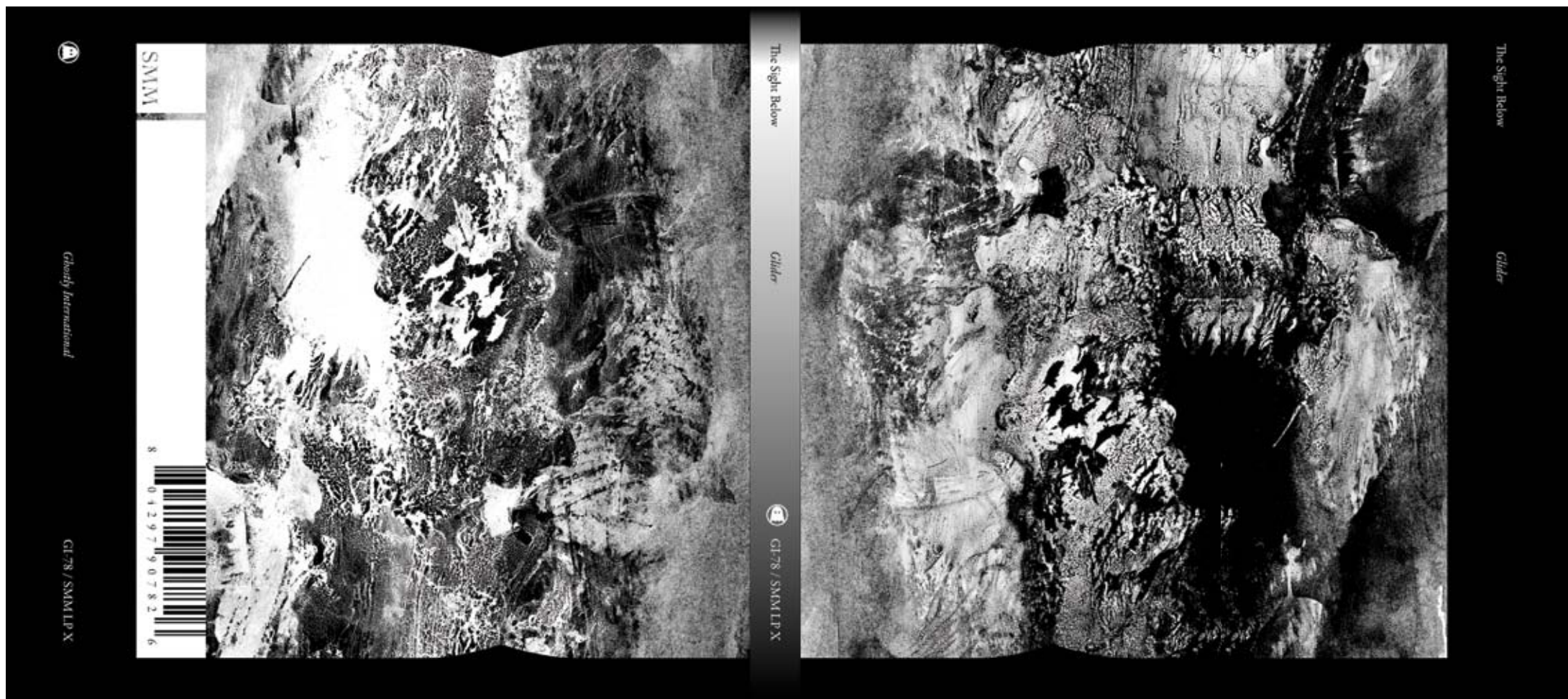


What kind of music do you listen to while you work?

Recently, it has been all modern classical, drone, ambient-kinda stuff. I really work well when I can concentrate. I really hate it when music distracts you and throws you off. Sometimes you don’t even know it’s the music. Right now, I am listening to Ethernet but the last two weeks I have been enjoying Loscil, Fjordne, Supersilent, Deathprod, Steven R Smith, aAerial, Ben Klock, The Sight Below, Kirby Leyland, and Mokira. Overall, I listen to everything—I am a music fanatic.

Opposite:
[Untitled painting](#)

Above:
[Character from the Agostina typeface](#)



What ideas or directive, if any, did Ghostly give you when you started working with them?

[Label head] Sam Valenti is a visionary and I respect what he is doing 100%. When he asked me to do some work for Ghostly, Sam just said to do what you feel. He has stuck to his word this entire time and really is an advocate for design. As a designer, when someone says “do what you want,” it really means “do what you want, but after I see it I am going to give you a list of changes.” That has never happened. Overall, it is the most pure work I have done to date.

Which designers in the past seem to have had the biggest influence on your work?

For design: Emil Ruder, Wolfgang Weingart, Wim Crouwel, Bauhaus School, Josef Muller-Brockmann, Karel Martens,

Jacqueline Casey. For art: Rothko, Richter, Rauschenberg, Keiichi Tanaami, Cy Twombly, Warhol, Christopher Wool.

What are your five favorite album covers of all time, and why?

Let me start by saying that ECM, Factory, Blue Note, and 4AD overall did no wrong. Lee Morgan’s *The Rumproller* is absolute classic typographic warping. Led Zeppelin’s *Presence*... Seeing this as a seven-year-old kid, it rocked my world. I spent hours of my life staring at this cover and thinking about what that object could be and why is it so important? I asked my parents what that object was and they didn’t know. Hipgnosis really were artists that happened to do album covers. Howlin’ Wolf’s *This is Howlin’ Wolf’s new album. He doesn’t like it. He didn’t like his electric guitar at first either.* It was pretty daring

for Cadet to do a series of all text records; it fit in with the advertisements of the day. It also says he didn’t like the LP on the front cover. A true recipe for success! (Also see Muddy Waters’ *Electric Mud* and Section 25’s *Section 25*.) The 4AD compilation *Lonely is an Eyesore*, this album just rocked my world when I saw it. I didn’t even know what design was when I first bought it, but I knew this was perfection. Dave Liebman’s *Drum Ode*. If you forced me to pick one ECM cover, this would be it.

Where in nature do you find the most interesting shapes and forms?

All of nature contains patterns and math at the structure. There really isn’t much in nature that I

don’t like looking at; that is one of the reasons I live in Minnesota. As an artist, all I am doing is ripping off what nature has already done 1000 times better.

What’s the best advice you’ve ever received?

I don’t even know what the best piece of advice would be. Most of what I learn in life is by making mistakes, not so much advice. My life is a path of mistakes. Listening to what other people say is hard for me to do.

Opposite:
[The Sight Below’s Glider](#)

This Page:
[Jabberjaw “The Ghost of Eden” 12”](#)



TO READ THE FULL TRANSCRIPT OF THIS INTERVIEW, VISIT XLR8R.COM/130EXTRAS.

DANCING ABOUT ARCHITECTURE

BLDGBLOG'S GEOFF MANAUGH SOUNDS OFF ON THE YEAR'S BEST AUDIO INSTALLATIONS.



MILITARY BUNKERS FROM NICK SOWERS' INSTALLATIONS

From the New York subway's train No. 2—whose whistle, according to a February 2009 article in the *New York Times*, sounds like Leonard Bernstein when it pulls in to Times Square—to serious discussions about how we might “tune” the silent engines of electric cars, 2009 was a year for acoustic speculation.

It was a year in which we could attach headphones to trees and listen to the upward-welling slurping sounds of sap and water. Though English artist Alex Metcalfe's project debuted in 2007 in the UK, it made its way to North America this year, via Canada's Oakville Gardens. Literally plugging headphone jacks into the pulpy trunks and branches of groaning trees, Metcalfe produced what he calls *Tree Listening*.

Of course, if we didn't want to listen to trees, we could just play the buildings around us. For *Playing the Building*, a sonic project by ex-Talking Head David Byrne that came to London in 2009, you could sit down at an “antique organ” and hit whatever keys or chords your heart desired—but you wouldn't be producing free jazz, whether Cecil Taylor or Matthew Shipp, and you would certainly be no Gershwin. You would instead trigger a “series of devices,” as Byrne describes them: hammers and dampers distributed throughout the building

in which you sat. Distant windowpanes and metal cross-beams, hooked up to wires, would begin to vibrate, tap, and gong. Imagine someone like this sitting in the darkness beneath Manhattan, causing haunted musics and unexplained knocks inside rooms and abandoned buildings around the city. Now, even urban infrastructure will be musicalized.

An amazing project called *Touched Echo* by Markus Kison, for instance, used the anatomical phenomenon of bone-conduction to hide audio files in the infrastructure of the city. Lean against the rail of a pedestrian bridge in Dresden, Germany and you would “hear” an explosive roar of recordings made in that city on February 12, 1945, the night of its fire-bombing during World War II. Kison's work suggests the fascinating possibility that we could acoustically hijack the city—let alone our own apartment buildings—by covertly publishing sounds somewhere in their structures. You never know where those sounds might be—until you touch the right door knob, or lean against the right wall, and an unreleased track bone-conducts its way into your body. Perhaps the b in b-sides should stand for buildings.

Speaking of World War II, 2009 saw Nick Sowers, a graduate student in architecture at UC Berkeley, win a John K. Branner Fellowship to travel the

world for more than a year. He's been making field recordings inside abandoned military sites, army bases, and related architectural ruins in nearly two dozen countries to produce an acoustic study of landscapes and war. Microphone in hand, Sowers crawls into bunkers and pup tents to capture empty shells of sound—dripping water, low wind, spatial reverb—and the results have been uploaded onto his blog for all to hear.

With the economic downturn, however, our ruins are not necessarily ancient (nor made of stone). Reimagining Dubai, the ultimate boom-and-bust city, with its barely inhabited seven-star hotels and its artificial islands now abandoned, as an alternative setting for *The Shining*, Jace Clayton (a.k.a. DJ /rupture) and his band, Nettle, have composed a preemptive soundtrack to that unmade remake. Synth bass and moaning cellos drone together to suggest broken air conditioners and unwalked halls, as Nettle creates the sonic signature that Dubai's drained downtown might soon be known for. Perhaps this will be the first soundtrack for an unmade film that actually gets optioned for production.

Geoff Manaugh's writings can be found at bldgblog.com

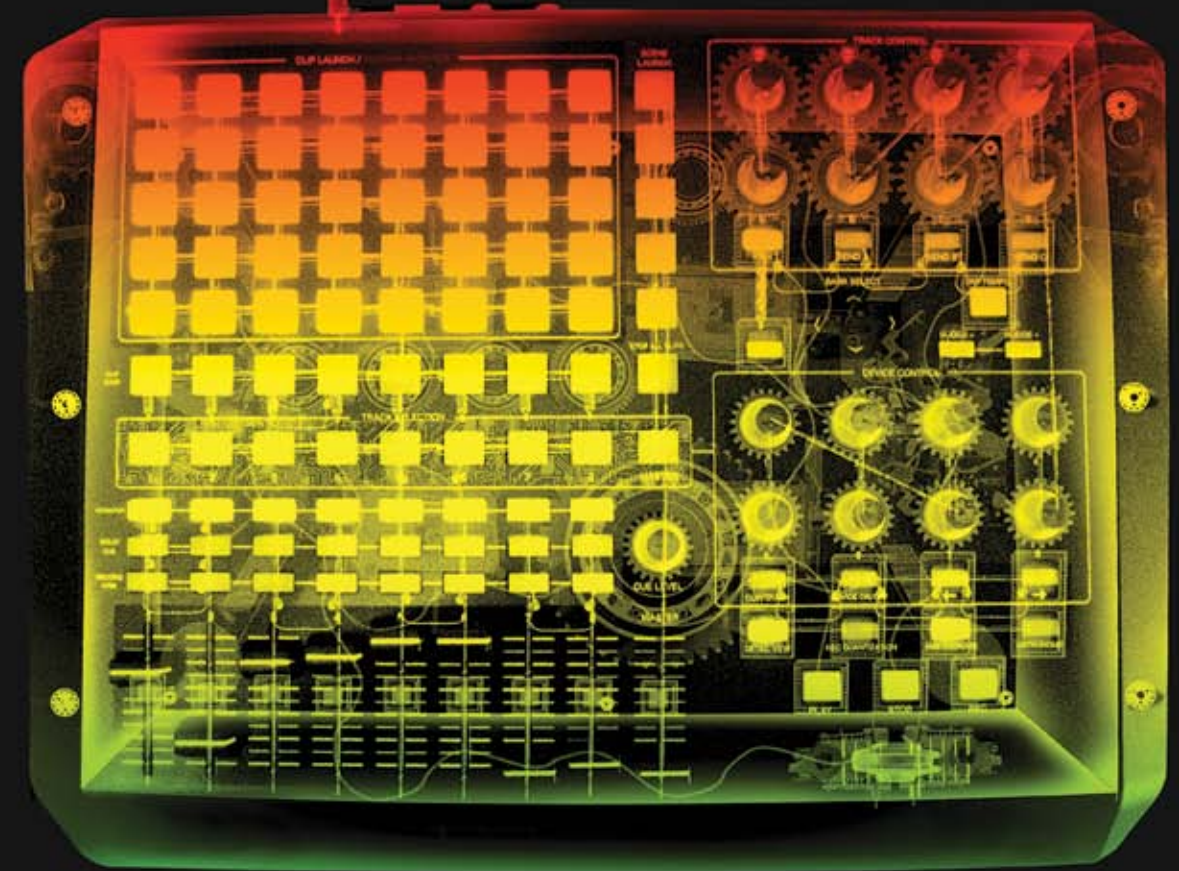


CHECK OUT SOME OF GEOFF MANAUGH'S FAVORITE SOUND INSTALLATIONS AT XLR8R.COM/130EXTRAS.

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